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THE HISTORICAL ARCHEOLOGY OF THE MORGAN CITY FLOODWALL  
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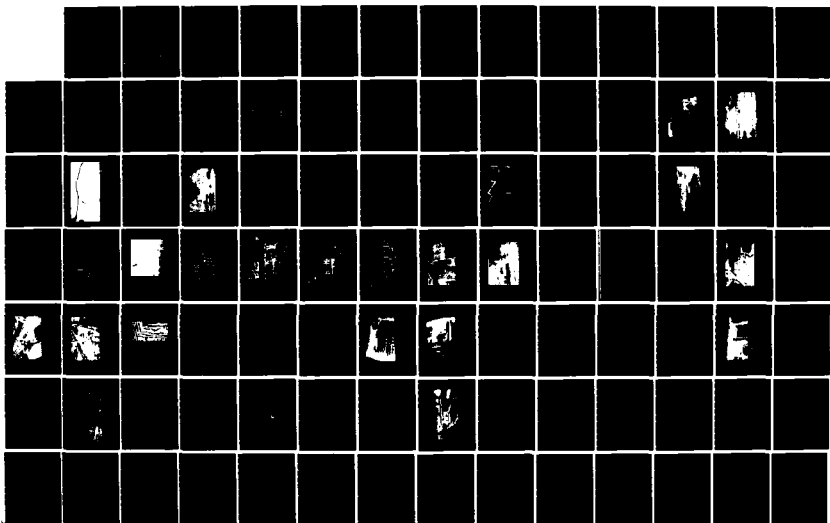
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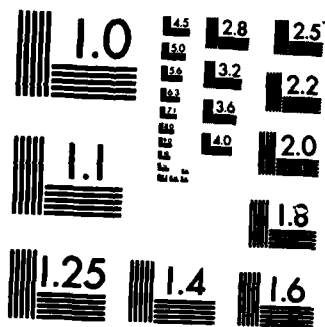
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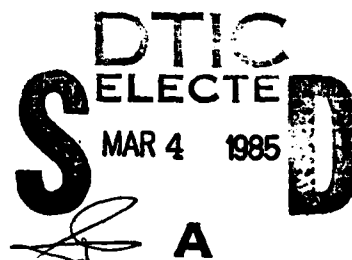
Report No. PD-RC-84-09

**THE HISTORICAL ARCHEOLOGY OF THE  
MORGAN CITY FLOODWALL BOAT**

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1306 Burdette Street  
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December 6, 1984

Prepared for:  
Department of the Army  
New Orleans District  
Corps of Engineers  
P.O. Box 60267  
New Orleans, Louisiana 70160



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20. ABSTRACT (Continue on reverse side if necessary and identify by block number)  During May and June 1984, archival and historical research and oral informant interviews were undertaken to determine the historical setting of the Morgan City Floodwall boat, and to trace the land use history of the project area, on Berwick Bay, Morgan City, St. Mary Parish, Louisiana. Archival research demonstrated the continuous and active use of wharf facilities at Morgan City throughout the 19th Century. Schooners, barges, steamboats and Civil War gunboats all are well documented for 19th Century Morgan City. Using primary		

Abstract continued.

archival documentation and stratigraphic data obtained from informant interviews both a terminus ante quem and terminus post quem for the Morgan City Floodwall Boat were established. That vessel appears to have been deposited during the period around the 1870s.

During August, 1984, field investigations of the floodwall boat were undertaken to discern the nature and the significance of the vessel. Field data, laboratory data, and additional archival data pertaining to 19th century boat construction were used to identify the vessel as a small barge. That barge may have served as a ferry across Berwick Bay; as an ice barge; or, both. The vessel site was observed to have been virtually destroyed by a sequence of destructive episodes that spanned several decades. Although the barge was documented during this study, no further work was recommended.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The Morgan City boat site is located in Section 6, Township 16S, Range 12E, on the east bank of Berwick Bay in downtown Morgan City, St. Mary Parish, Louisiana (Figure 1). It is on the flood side of the old floodwall adjacent to Front Street, and between Greenwood and Freret Streets. It fronts lots 9-11 of Square 34. At the time of archival and field work, the site was inundated by high water in the Lower Atchafalaya River. In addition, it was buried below several feet of oyster shell fill.

During construction of a new Morgan City Floodwall during Spring, 1984, articulated timbers suggestive of a marine vessel were encountered at approximately six feet below the present ground surface. Upon closer inspection, personnel from the Corps of Engineers, New Orleans District, identified these as the charred hull of one or more boats. The area between bankline stations 110+39 and 112+00 subsequently was declared a no-work area by the New Orleans District until the historical significance of the vessel could be determined.

During May and June, 1984, R. Christopher Goodwin and Associates, Inc., performed archival and historic research and intensive informant interviews in an attempt to identify and to establish an historic context for the vessel. These investigations focused on the land use history of the project area, including the development of a chronology of the changing configuration of the bankline; on an archivally-based reconstruction of the historic period stratigraphy of the site; and, on an examination of the history of marine travel, river traffic, and of recorded shipwrecks in and around the project area.

The first sections of this report, then, present the results of historic research, and establish an historic and economic context for the vessel or vessels in question. These data served to guide subsequent field investigations, and delineated a range of expectations about the nature and configuration of vessel remains likely to be found in the project area. This use of the direct historical approach was requisite to the identification of the remains located during construction of the new floodwall, which already was nearing completion at the time the site first was observed.

The river stage of the Lower Atchafalaya was a key factor governing field work at the Morgan City boat site. During the preparation of the archival report, the river stage varied around five feet; since the top of the observed timbers were located from seven to eight feet below the river at that time, the construction trench containing the site remained under water for several months. In August, 1984, the river stage had dropped to about 2.7 NGVD feet, slowing the rate of seepage from the river into the construction trench. Using a combination of pumps, sumps, barks, and ditches, a portion of the site could be dewatered sufficiently to enable testing of the site using standard archeological



techniques. Thus, following discussion of the history of the project area, field techniques applied and the results of field work at the site are presented.

The final sections of this report review archival, field, and laboratory data in order to describe the morphology and context of the remains that were documented in the field. Finally, the function of the vessel is discussed, using morphological and historical data, as well as analogies to similar vessels known both historically and archivally. Although enough remained of one vessel to permit its recordation and documentation, the Morgan City boat also was subject to decades of destructive processes before it was uncovered during recent floodwall construction. The stratigraphy of the project area, then, has provided information on site formation and destruction processes, as well as on the nature of late nineteenth century commercial occupation of a growing port in South Louisiana.

## CHAPTER II

### THE EARLY EXPLORATION AND SETTLEMENT OF TIGER ISLAND

The Morgan City boat and all of present day Morgan City lie on Tiger Island. Tiger Island is bounded by Bayou Ramos to the east, Bayou Boeuf to the south, the Intracoastal Waterway and Lake Palourde to the north, and by Berwick Bay to the West (Figure 1). Berwick Bay, a widened portion of the Atchafalaya River, falls between the confluences of the Atchafalaya River and Bayous Boeuf and Teche. It forms part of the Lower Atchafalaya Basin, which is bounded to the west by the relict Teche-Mississippi meander belt, now occupied by Bayou Teche. Teche-Mississippi natural levees extend southeast to form the southern boundary of the Basin. Bayous Black, l'Ourse, and Boeuf presently occupy this relict meander belt system. Bayou Lafourche, a main channel of another relict deltaic distributary system, forms the eastern boundary of the Lower Basin.

The word "Atchafalaya" is derived from the Choctaw Indian language and means "long river" (Comeaux 1972:1). The Atchafalaya and Grand Rivers occupy the lower portion of the Basin, and form a system of dividing and rejoining distributaries that empty into Lake Fausse Pointe, Grand Lake (including Six Mile Lake and Lake Palourde), and Lake Verret. These lakes constitute collection basins for surface waters of the Lower Atchafalaya area, which drain into Atchafalaya Bay.

This extensive distributary system produces a natural setting requiring waterborne transportation. The exploration, colonization, and later settlement of this area generated a diachronic increase in the number of watercraft plying the Atchafalaya River.

Thomas Berwick is thought to have been the earliest explorer and settler of Tiger Island (Figure 1). A surveyor of the Opelousas District in the 1790s, Berwick's explorations led through the adjoining Attakapas District and eventually to Tiger Island. Berwick's discovery and naming of Berwick's Bay is believed to have resulted from his attempts to determine a Bayou Teche route to the Gulf of Mexico (Morgan City Historical Society 1960:11). Berwick and his wife, Eleanor Wallace, had eight children. Their son, Joseph Berwick, was the de facto founder and namesake of the Town of Berwick, which lies across Berwick Bay from the present site of Morgan City.

Historic documentation of land tenure in the project area begins with a Spanish land grant received by Joseph and Eleanor Wallace Berwick, the son and wife of Thomas Berwick. Signed by the Baron de Carondelet on July 3, 1797, six years before the acquisition of the Louisiana Territory by the United States (COB B-A, Folio 91, St. Mary Parish), this grant conveyed to the Berwicks a tract of land described as "seventy arpents of Tiger Island facing the east bank of the river Teche" (Morgan City Historical Society 1960:11).

Shortly after the Louisiana Purchase, in September, 1805, Lt. Enoch Humphrey, U.S.A., undertook a short exploration of the Atchafalaya Basin. Humphrey's 1805 letter report to Lt. Col.

Constant Freeman, contained in "Letters Received by the Secretary of War, Unregistered Series, 1789-1861," briefly refers to families that already had settled in the area:

From the confluence of the Teche to the sea, the River has been named the Chafalia (sic), or Berwick's Bay; from the mouth of the Teche to Negro Island (Bateman Island) the distance is 2 (and) 1/8 miles. There are two families settled on the upper end of this island, and four below the mouth of the Teche (Comeaux 1976:153-154).

Malcolm Comeaux (1976:154) noted that the absence of names in this passage makes it difficult to identify the four families who lived near the present project area. Comeaux (1976:154) concluded, nevertheless, that two of these families undoubtedly were those of Thomas Berwick and of Luke Bryan. In 1811, Berwick's heirs were confirmed as owners of a 1600 arpent tract on Berwick Bay (Comeaux 1976:154). The Berwick's Tiger Island plantation was one of the earliest sugar cane plantations in the Attakapas District.

The name "Attakapas" is derived from a Choctaw word, e.g., Atakapa, Atakapas, meaning "man eater." The Attakapas District included the areas of the present day parishes of St. Martin, St. Mary, Iberia, Lafayette, and Vermillion. Between 1720 and 1744, St. Denis established the Postes des Attakapas at the present site of St. Martinville. This post served as the focus of settlement of the Teche-Atchafalaya region during the eighteenth century. The first European settlers in the Attakapas region were the traders, trappers, soldiers, and priests that formed the nucleus of the French colonial settlement pattern in the New World. During the initial French colonial period, however, the Attakapas District remained virtually uninhabited by Europeans. The first major influx of settlers came in 1765, two years after the cession of Canada to Great Britain at the end of the Seven Years War. At that time, Acadian migrants from Canada began to settle in the area in increasing numbers (Griffin 1959:13). A second migrant group of three hundred Canary Islanders arrived in the area in 1769. According to Acting Governor O'Reilly's 1769 census, at that time the population of the entire Attakapas district was only 409 (Griffin 1959:12). In that year, the post at St. Martinville became a permanent military post with a Spanish commandant (Sanders 1962). The post then began giving land grants, or patents, in the Teche-Atchafalaya region. Still, the area was remote, and a census taken during the 1770s listed just under 800 inhabitants in the entire Attakapas District (Sanders 1962). The early settlers of the area were described by William H. Perrin in his turn of the nineteenth century history of St. Mary Parish:

They did not come to Louisiana in great rushing crowds, but in meager squads. They had abandoned home, some of them driven away at point of English bayonets, and plunged into these vast solitudes to live, where the

luxuries of life were among the lost arts. These sturdy, lone mariners of the desert were men of action and nerve. They whetted their instincts for existence against the wild game, the ferocious beasts, and the murderous savages (Perrin 1891:215).

After the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, the U.S. Congress divided the Louisiana Territory into two parts, the southernmost of which was designated the Territory of Orleans. In 1805, the Attakapas district became Attakapas County, one of twelve counties which originally had formed the Territory of Orleans. In 1807, Attakapas County became the civil parish of St. Martin, named after the fourteenth century French bishop and saint (Griffin 1962). An 1811 territorial council decision subsequently divided St. Martin Parish into two parishes, thus creating St. Mary Parish. A year later, Louisiana became a state.

Because the lower Atchafalaya Basin was both undeveloped and pristine during the early American period, its live oak and cypress timber reserves quickly drew the attention of the Federal Government. Government action pertaining to this area no doubt was based on recognition of the importance of sea trade and of maritime power following the War of 1812. Thus, in 1817, the U.S. Congress passed an act "Authorizing the President to Institute Necessary Surveys and to Make Reservation of Such Timber Lands for the Benefit of the Navy." In response to this act, on November 4, 1818, John C. Calhoun, Secretary of War and Acting Secretary of the Navy, commissioned John Leander Cathcart, James Hutton, and John Landreth to survey the Attakapas District.

Both Cathcart and Landreth kept journals of the survey. These reports and journals contain the earliest descriptions of the lands surrounding the project area. Of course, both of these journals emphasized the timber resources of the area. Cathcart wrote of Tiger Island:

Where we landed on the South side of Tiger Island, which bounds the Northside of Bayou Boeuf, small cane was growing in abundance on the margin (and) at 100 yards distance it was large and impassible, there was a bad groth (sic) of live oak on the ridge, behind the low land or swamp, but of no consequence, as the land is not sufficiently elevated, or dry on this part of the Island, to produce good timber, although the existence of Cane evinces that the soil is congenial to its groth (sic) (Pritchard et al. 1945:791-792).

Landreth also detailed a visit to Bryan's (originally O'Brien) plantation, which was located southeast of the project area on Tiger Island:

We then Steer Still in Bayou Buff West by North two hundred yards to the dwelling



Plantation of the Bryans who claim Tiger Island. here Mr. Cathcart Mr. Hutton and myself went ashore and looked at some Timber which Mr. Bowles got for the United States the Timber is very fine here we saw Mr. Huttons Mounds. we went and examined the growing Timber found considerable quantity of good Live Oak and it is said there is a great deal on other Island but there the Island being generally very low and the Timber being generally pretty far back a great deal of the best Live Oak Land next the water being cleared that it would be scarth worth getting. but this is the case only on Bayou Buff but no part of Tiger Island can be two miles from navigable water (D. Gibson 1979, sic throughout).

Portions of Tiger Island previously owned by both the Berwick family and by the Bryans (O'Brien) were presented as claims to the United States Government shortly after St. Mary Parish was established. Indeed, these two early Tiger Island families were related by marriage after 1802, when Luke Bryan married Rebecca W. Berwick, the daughter of Thomas Berwick, Sr. In 1811, Luke Bryan was appointed the first Sheriff of St. Mary Parish by Governor Claiborne. Although the Berwick's former ownership of Tiger Island was confirmed by the United States on September 25, 1813, by that date these holdings already had been divided and sold (Lowrie and Franklin 1834:844). The initial transaction involving the project area during the American period appears to have been the sale of half of a seventy arpent front property by Joseph Berwick to Christopher Adams. Although archival records describing the details of this transaction are missing, when Adams, in turn, sold this thirty five arpent front tract to Henry Johnson in May, 1812, this portion of the former Berwick holding was described as:

That certain tract or parcel of land, lying situate and being in the Attakapas and on the east side of Bayou Teche, on an island between the Teche and the Lakes which extends to Berwick's Bay; having thirty five arpents in front with the depth of forty, being the depth which Joseph & Eleanor Berwick the original grantees were in title to, unless that depth should not be found in consequence of the Lake on the back part, and then in that case it is understood that all the depth extending to the lake or such depth as the J. & E. Berwick would have been entitled to as aforesaid, it being one moiety of a tract of seventy arpents in front by the ordinary depth of forty granted to the said J. & E. Berwick by the Spanish Government (COB B-A, Folio 43, St. Mary Parish).

In 1813, Joseph Berwick also sold an additional adjacent quarter of the seventy arpent front property in question directly to Henry Johnson; the remaining quarter apparently had been sold at an earlier and unknown date to John Merriman (COB B-A, Folio 91, St. Mary Parish).

These acquisitions by Johnson of about fifty three arpents front on the left (east) bank of Bayou Teche (Berwick Bay) were made while Johnson was serving as the first Parish Judge (Perrin 1891:219). An 1838 plat map (Figure 2) shows that Henry Johnson was claimant of Section 6, Township 16S, Range 12E, in which the present project area is located (Figure 2). Between 1812 and 1816, Johnson sold forty arpents of his riverfront holdings to the brothers William B. and Sterling Robertson. This property was:

...a certain tract of land situated in the Parish of St. Mary on an island fronting the little lake commonly called Berwick's Bay...the same being a...tract of forty arpents on front...conveyed by the said Henry Johnson to the said William B. Robertson and Sterling C. Robertson... (COB B-A, Folio 201, #406, June 8, 1816, St. Mary Parish).

During the 1830s, Dr. Walter Brashear, for whom the town of Brashear later was named, began buying land on Tiger Island. Brashear, a prominent physician and native of Maryland, was a descendent of the French house of Brassier. Schooled at Transylvania College in Kentucky and at the University of Pennsylvania, at one time or another Dr. Brashear owned Tiger Island Plantation, Golden Farm Plantation, Bayou Boeuf Plantation, and Cote Blanche, Grand Cote, Petite Anse and Orange Islands (Morgan City Historical Society 1960:13).

On August 18, 1832, Brashear purchased from William Blunt Robertson the tract of Tiger Island property that previously had been owned by Henry Johnson. In consideration for \$5,000.00, Brashear received a parcel of land located:

on the island commonly known by the name of Tiger Island...containing forty arpents front on Berwick's Bay by a depth of fifteen arpents (COB C, Folio 579, St. Mary Parish).

Three years later, on May 21, 1835, Brashear bought an additional parcel of land from Henry Johnson for the sum of \$2,100.00. It was described as:

...situated on Tiger Island in the said Parish of St. Mary fronting on Berwick's Bay and containing six hundred and sixty superficial arpents more or less. The same tract of land was purchased by the present vendor from Christopher Adams (COB 8, Folio 8, St. Mary Parish).



Figure 2. Excerpt of 1838 plat of Township 16S, Range 12E, listing Henry Johnson as claimant of Section 6, project area indicated by arrow (Morgan City Archives).

Together, these lands acquired by Dr. Walter Brashear became known as Brashear City. In 1842, Brashear donated this large tract to his children, Robert B., Thomas T., and Frances E. Brashear. Conveyed were:

...two certain tracts of land situated on the east side of the Atchafalaya at Berwick's Bay in Said Parish on the island called Tiger Island, one of which tracts was purchased by the said Walter of Blunt Robertson and the other of Henry Johnson, the two tracts containing together twelve hundred and forty arpents more or less with the two steam engines therein situated and all the buildings, mills, (furnaces), house hold and kitchen furniture, carts, wagons and other implements of agriculture, also the blacksmith cowpens and carpenters tools, also all the horses, mules, oxen, milk stock and dry cattle therein together with the following negro slaves for life...(COB 11, Folio 523, St. Mary Parish).

A list of slaves conveyed in this act of donation is contained in Table 1. As will be seen, it was the Brashear family, aided by their rather substantial land and capital assets, that played the major role in the antebellum development and accelerating settlement of the Tiger Island area.

TABLE 1. Slaves included in Brashear's Tiger Island  
Plantation donation of 1842. (COB 11, Folio 532,  
St Mary Parish)

Name	Age
Adam	38
Aaron Crapper	51
Aaron Smith	30
Alick	30
Augustus Johnson	25
Armstead	30
Amos	20
Billy Bryant	58
Billy Stump	40
Charles	45
Daniel Atin	30
Copeland	35
Dudly	30
Edmund	27
Edward	30
Henry Todd	33
Henry Cox	30
Harry Brown	25
Isaac Eastin	42
Jim Roy	38
Jerry Key	34
Jacob	30
Lewis	40
Joshua	26
Jim Pendleton	25
Moris George	30
Moris Clay	48
Rolla	30
Sam Peyton	38
Walker	35
Brooks	28
Bob	36
Ben	28
Jim Todd	34
Ferrell	18
Albert	21
George Boswell	20
Job Pray	16
Alfred	14
Sam Ferrygood	36
Henry Bryan	18
Lark Thomas	48
Saunders	13
Willis	13

TABLE 1. Continued.

Maria Key and her children	32
Amanda	11
Dick	10
Margaret	8
William	6
Brayton	3
Maria	1
Lucinda and her children	25
Elisha	8
Peter	6
Clifton	4
Frances	4 mo
Milly and her children	40
Esther	9
Levin	5
Violetta and her children	25
Sarah	10
Cyrus	8
Winny	6
Washington	4
Ara Ann	2
Lelly and her children	30
Osbourne	12
Edney	8
Nat	7
Sarah	5
Walter	2
Abram	1
Maria Crow and her children	22
Coleman	6
Delphi	1
Elija Atin and her children	24
Lucy	4
Harrisson	18 mo
Betsy and her children	27
Nelson	10
Polly	8
Nancy	5
Mac	2
Patsy	1 mo
Eliza Cox and her children	21
Larry	10
Evelina	3
Tyler	1
Becky and her children	40
Alfred	12
America	10
Celia	8
Jenny and her child	18
Laura	1
Maria and her child	15
Primera	infant

TABLE 1. Continued.

Mary Bryan and her child	no age given
Georgiana	10 mo
Mathilda and her children	32
Annette	3
Allen	1
Tamin	48
Jenny	58
Anna	14
Rhody	14
Corilla	18

## CHAPTER III

### BRASHEAR CITY DURING THE ANTEBELLUM PERIOD

Following their acquisition of Dr. Walter Brashear's large land holdings on Tiger Island, the Brashear brothers, Robert and Thomas, took steps to increase the importance and profitability of the area. During the 1850s, construction of a railroad from Algiers to Berwick's Bay was initiated by the New Orleans, Opelousas, and Great Western Railroad Company. In anticipation of this event, Robert B. and Thomas T. Brashear, having formed R. B. Brashear & Company, issued a grant to the railroad company providing a right-of-way through their Tiger Island Plantation. Dated January 1, 1853, this initial grant was rewritten on January 17th of the same year with no apparent change in the wording. Both versions were recorded on August 20, 1856 (COB L, Folio 453 and COB B, Entry No. 213, St. Mary Parish). This grant entitled the New Orleans, Opelousas, and Grant Western Railroad to:

...no more land is to be reserved for use of said road than is absolutely necessary for the convenient, safe transit of the locomotive and cars over as many tracks of rails as the business of company may require; also there is hereby granted a sufficient quantity of land for station house water tank or depot, not exceeding one acre of land on the immediate line of road, should the convenience of the road require it (Morell 1956:1).

On May 19, 1853, the railroad company purchased a lot from the Brashears for the sum of \$1.00 for the purpose of constructing a depot and machine shop for the company. This lot is described as:

A certain lot of ground on the eastern bank of Berwick's Bay at the present terminus of the survey of said bay, containing a frontage of said bay of 260 feet with a depth of 510 feet, to be located on either side or both sides of the railroad track at the option of the undersigned, signed by R. E. Brashear, T. T. Brashear (Morell 1956:1).

An additional grant, dated August 7, 1856, and recorded on August 20, 1856 (COB L, Folio 456, St. Mary Parish), entitled the New Orleans, Opelousas, & Great Western Railroad Company the right to construct and maintain wharves, sheds, and other buildings in and on the margin of Berwick Bay for a distance of 130 feet above and 200 feet below the center line of the railroad (COB L, Folio 456, #8559, St. Mary Parish). In a subsequent contract between the Brashears and the railroad dated February 14, 1857, the Brashears agreed to allow even more development along the river front. That



contract, synopsisized by Morell (1956), was undertaken:

...to grant free of cost to the railroad company the right to construct one track from Railroad Ave. through squares 8 and 10 in a line with Union St. and through the middle of Union St. to and into the margin of Berwick Bay, the right of constructing a coal yard wharf and cattle landing. This contract further states that it is also understood that Front of Water Street is to be left open and unobstructed except by track being laid across a width of 75 feet. It is further understood that all crossings of streets over the tracts of said Railroad Company are to be made and maintained in good order by said company. Provides further that whenever said wharves are abandoned or no longer required by the railroad for the uses and purposes specified, the land to revert to the undersigned or their heirs (Morell 1956:2-3).

This latter contract established the intent of the Brashears that property along the river front was intended for public use as a street and for public wharves (viz Morell 1956:3). Together these acts, conveyances, and contracts served to bring the railroad to Tiger Island, to establish it there, and to provide the foundation for a viable and productive community on the east bank of Berwick Bay.

Several other steps were taken to attract residents to what was essentially a planned community. In 1853, A. L. Fields was commissioned by the Brashears to prepare his Plan of the Town of Brashear (Figure 3). This plat served as a blueprint for Brashear City. Following preparation of this plan, in 1855 R. B. Brashear & Company advertised in the Picayune (New Orleans) that it was going to "donate 50 to 100 lots to homesteading mechanics, shopkeepers, artisans, etc., in the settlement on Berwick Bay" where "speedy growth is a certainty" (Morgan City Historical Society 1960:15). On April 16, 1857, remaining lots between Berwick Bay and Sixth Street and between Brashear Avenue and Bayou Boeuf were sold at auction. This paved the way for the incorporation of the Town of Brashear in 1860. Brashear City shortly after its incorporation is depicted in Figure 4.

In 1855, the settlement of Berwick Bay acquired its first post office, and Robert Brashear was named Postmaster. A petition by the three hundred residents of the settlement prompted incorporation of the "Town of Brashear" by an act of the Louisiana legislature in March, 1860. Boundaries for the Town of Brashear were defined as:

all that tract or parcel of ground in the Parish of St. Mary, beginning at and upon the margin of the east bank of Berwick's Bay, and



Map of Town of Brashear  
 made by A. L. Fields  
 of 200 feet to the inch

Figure 3. Excerpt of A. L. Fields' 1853 subdivision plan of the Town of Brashear, project area not shown (Morgan City Archives).

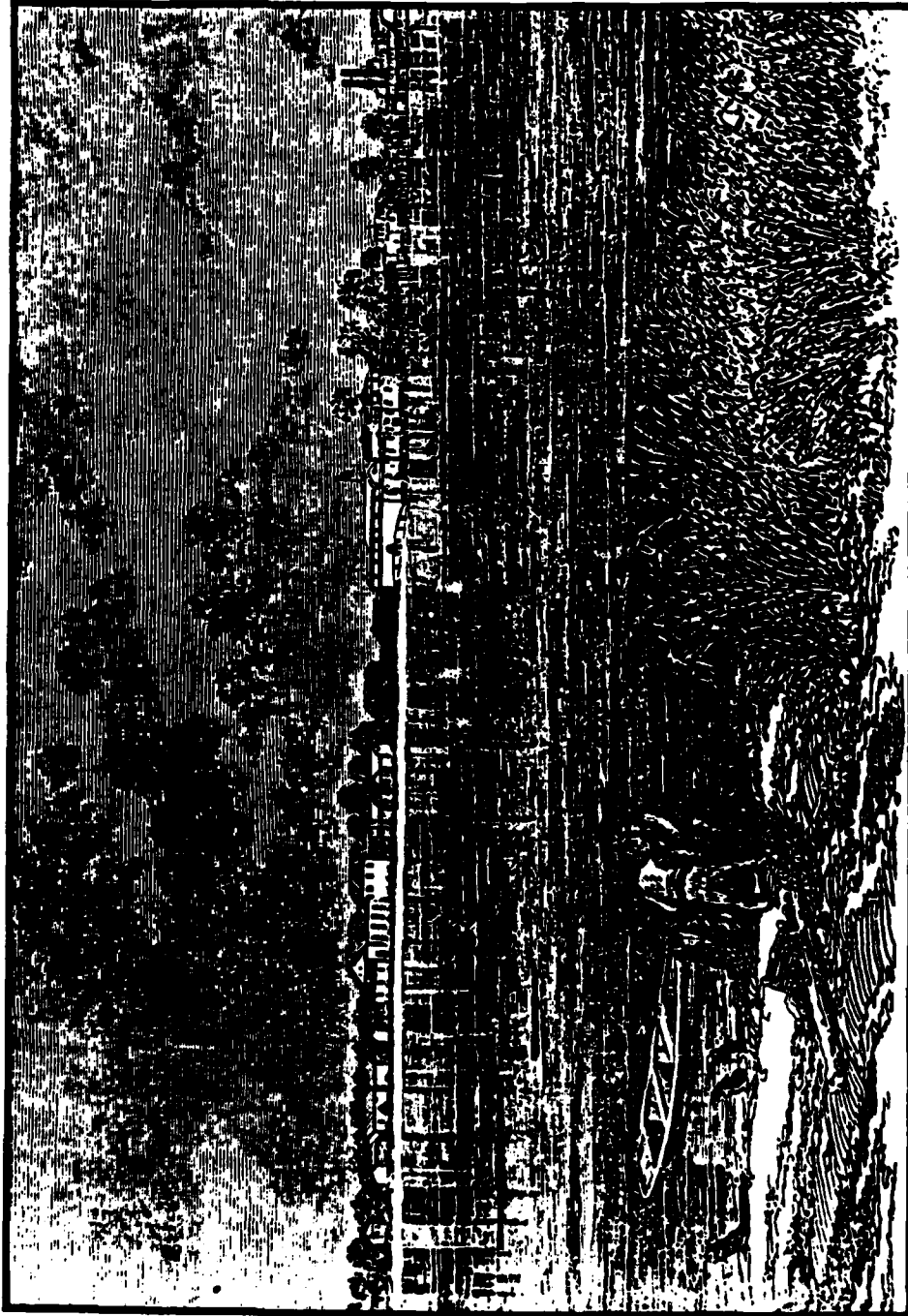


Figure 4. View of Brashear City looking east from the Berwick side of Berwick Bay, ca. 1861, showing the project area in left background (Morgan City Archives).

running thence along and with the north line of Brashear Ave. to the boundary line of lands belonging to Olympus Young; thence following the said boundary line southward to Bayou Boeuf; thence along the shore or margin of Bayou Boeuf to Berwick's Bay and along the margin of Berwick's Bay to the place of beginning (Morgan City Historical Society 1960:15-16).

Permits for use of the waterfront subsequently were granted by the Town of Brashear; these are recorded as ordinances in the Town Council Proceedings and in the Record of Ordinances (see Appendices 1 & 2). The first record of wharf privileges on Berwick Bay appears in the Council Proceedings of 1861. At that time, the New Orleans, Opelousas, and Great Western Railroad petitioned for a grant to extend their wharf three hundred feet northward up Berwick Bay, reserving the northernmost one hundred feet for a public ferry landing. On April 12, 1861, the War Between the States was declared.

## CHAPTER IV

### BRASHEAR CITY DURING THE CIVIL WAR

The loss or destruction of city records from the Civil War period resulted in a five year hiatus in the archival documentation of land use in Brashear. Thus, the history of the project area during this period is known primarily through military records and personal communications. Newspapers in the area also ceased publication during the war. Nevertheless, Brashear's strategic importance during the Civil War is fairly well-documented:

As western terminus of the only line of railway in southern Louisiana and a port on the Atchafalaya River, a main artery of traffic into the interior of Louisiana and west to Texas, Brashear figured prominently in campaign plans on both sides and ended up battle-scarred from actual warfare on its site and ravaged and weary from constant occupation by troops (Morgan City Historical Society 1960:17).

During the first year of the war, the New Orleans, Opelousas, and Great Western Railroad provided transportation for Confederate troops and munitions. Three Confederate forts, Berwick, Bisland, and Chene, were constructed in the area, and a regiment of one thousand troops was assembled, all prior to December, 1861. The preparation of these defenses was accompanied by the creation of a partial blockade of the Atchafalaya River by sinking live oak trees in the main channel (Morgan City Historical Society 1960:19). In addition, navigational aids and lights were removed, leaving the channel unmarked (Wells 1979:294). Numerous small fortifications and gun emplacements were erected near Brashear City along the Berwick Bay shoreline. One of these, a "Rebel Battery," is shown to have been located on the east bank of Berwick Bay within the present project area on a ca. 1863 Union map of the city of Brashear prepared by Maj. A. Elfield, U.S.A. (Figure 5).

Federal accounts of Brashear City during the Civil War were not, in general, complimentary. Harris Beecher's Record of the 114th Regiment New York Volunteers was typical. Beecher wrote:

The town of Brashear has been dignified with the title of city, but it is in fact, a poor specimen of a squalid southern village, containing not more than three hundred people in time of peace. It is situated on the banks of Berwick Bay, which is about three fourths of a mile wide (Beecher 1866).

Nevertheless, as Raphael (1976:49) has noted, Brashear City was "The most strategic point in the bayou country campaign," because of its accessibility by land, water, and railroad transportation.



Figure 5. Excerpt of Union Army Maj. A. Elfield's "Position of Our Works," ca. 1863, showing a rebel battery located in the project area (Morgan City Archives).

Following the fall of New Orleans to Federal troops on April 25, 1862, and due to the concomitant interruption in the Confederate command structure, Confederate forces in the Brashear City area and in all of the bayou country turned to a form of guerilla warfare. Attacks were waged against the sites of supply lines, bridges, and railroad depots. Many of these attacks were led or directed by Brigadier General Alfred Mouton, a graduate of West Point who had been promoted after recovering from an injury sustained during the battle of Shiloh. Mouton's command of the 18th Louisiana Regiment, the Crescent, Terrebonne, and Thirty-third Regiments, and of the 2nd Louisiana Cavalry, gave him about 1400 troops (Raphael 1976:41). Throughout this period, all Confederate forces in west Louisiana served under the direction of General Richard Taylor, the son of President Zachary Taylor and brother-in-law of Jefferson Davis.

Union strategy in the area was planned and executed by Brigadier General Godfrey Weitzel, U.S.A., also a West Point graduate. Under orders from Major General Benjamin Butler, Weitzel was sent to Brashear City along with approximately 3000 troops of his Reserve Brigade. That brigade was composed of the 12th and 13th Connecticut, 75th New York, and 8th New Hampshire Regiments, and Troop "C" of the Massachusetts Cavalry (Raphael 1976:38). At Brashear City, Weitzel awaited four steam-driven Union gunboats requisitioned by General Butler for the Louisiana campaigns. They were the Estella, Calhoun, and Kinsman, and the Diana (Figure 6). Raphael (1970) described these gunboats as:

the light shallow-draught type, especially designed for action in the bayous and lakes of south Louisiana.

Both the Diana and the Kinsman were partially ironclad. Their combined role with Weitzel's ground forces was:

to attack some batteries at Berwick Bay, to penetrate the waters of the bay and tributaries, and cut off the supplies of cattle for the rebel army from Texas... and to act in conjunction with General Weitzel. At the same time push forward a column from Algiers... along the Opelousas Railroad... to Brashear City, open the railway for the purpose of forwarding supplies to General Weitzel's expedition (U.S. War Department 1891 (XV):159).

The four gunboats arrived in Berwick Bay on November 1, 1862.

Four days after their arrival, on November 5, 1862, the four Federal gunboats saw action fourteen miles upriver from Brashear City. Lt. Commander Thomas McKean Buchanan, U.S.A., who commanded this naval force from his flagship U.S.S. Calhoun, described that engagement and the role of the Kinsman as follows:



From Harper's Weekly

#### THE GUNBOAT BATTLE AT CORNAY'S BRIDGE

Figure 6. The gunboat battle at Cornnay's Bridge, showing the configuration of the Union gunboats (Raphael 1976).



Yesterday I went with all the gunboats up Bayou Teche, and found the enemy about 14 miles from here, posted above the obstructions they had sunk in the Teche. We engaged them for two hours and drove them off, as we also did the Cotton. The Kinsman bore the brunt of it, and received fifty-four shots in her upper works and hull... the iron casing on the Kinsman and Diana turned the shot beautifully (U.S. War Department 1891:673).

During the next few months, all four of these gunboats, operating out of their base at Brashear City, were involved in a series of patrols and engagements in the Teche-Atchafalaya region. Union naval and ground forces remained in control of Brashear City until June 23, 1863.

During one routine patrol on the Atchafalaya, on February 23, 1863, the Kinsman was damaged when it was struck by a log on its starboard side, just forward of the wheelhouse (Raphael 1976:77). According to Beecher's narrative account of the 114th Regiment New York Volunteers,

They were returning, on the evening of February 23d (1863), from a sail up in Grand Lake, on board the gunboat Kinsman, when the vessel, striking a snag, sprung a leak. In attempting to reach the dock at Brashear City, the boat suddenly sank, about fifty feet from the shore, and entirely disappeared (Beecher 1866:120).

According to Morris Raphael, the Kinsman's

Captain Wiggin then ordered the vessel downstream under the greatest pressure of steam hoping to get his boat astride the flats just below the Brashear City wharves. However, just as he passed the wharves the boat began sinking fast.... The Kinsman was run head on into the shore with her bow grounding in three feet of water, but a 15-foot pole probing at the stern revealed that there was no bottom. A line was ordered to be brought out from the starboard quarter in an effort to pull the boat broadside to the bank. However, before this could be accomplished the steamer filled rapidly with water, slid backwards from the bank and sank in about 18 fathoms of water with all the crewman's effects (Raphael 1976:78).

Five of the Kinsman's crew went down with the ship.  
On June 23, 1863, troops of General Tom Green's Fifth Texas

Mounted Volunteers and of the 2nd Louisiana Cavalry, under orders from General Richard Taylor, C.S.A., recaptured Brashear City in a daring waterborne assault. Using fifty-three assorted skiffs, canoes, and flats, the largest of which held fifteen men, a small group of Confederates stormed Brashear City from the rear after the so-called "Mosquito Fleet" arrived at Tiger Island on the Lake Palourde side. After removing captured supplies, the successful Confederates burned the rolling stock of the railroad in Brashear City, and ran the engines into Berwick Bay (Morgan City Historical Society 1960:25). No records exist that document vessel burnings and sinkings along the Brashear City waterfront during this engagement. In addition to the better documented gunboats, however, transports, flats, and small steamers all were present in the Union fleet at Brashear City. Thus, it is possible that such vessels may have been scuttled by the Confederate forces during their brief recapture of the town. Such an action is well-documented for the battle of Irish Bend near Franklin, where at least eight vessels, including three transports, were scuttled (Raphael 1976:117). In any event, Union forces regained control of Brashear City one month later. They remained in control of the town until the end of the war.

## CHAPTER V

### MORGAN CITY FROM THE LATE NINETEENTH CENTURY TO THE PRESENT

As early as 1857, steamboats began regularly to ply the Gulf of Mexico passenger and cargo trade between Brashear City and the Texas ports. The first of these steamboats, the sidewheelers Galveston and the Opelousas, were owned by Commodore Cornelius Vanderbilt. Early during the Civil War, Charles Morgan's steamships Austin and W.G. Hewes also were brought to Brashear City, in an attempt to avoid their loss to the conflict. In fact, it was Charles Morgan, a Connecticut entrepreneur and transportation pioneer, who made Brashear City a hub of waterborne and railway transportation during the last half of the nineteenth century.

In 1865, the New Orleans, Opelousas, & Great Western Railroad, commonly known as the "Opelousas Railroad," regained possession of its properties although it was unable to recoup losses incurred during the Civil War. In 1869, Charles Morgan purchased the bankrupt railroad at a U.S. Marshal's auction for \$2,050,000.00; he subsequently renamed it "Morgan's Louisiana & Texas Railroad." Permission to construct a wharf extension was granted to Morgan's Railroad by the Town of Brashear in an agreement dated August 3, 1869 (COB C, Folio 120, St. Mary Parish). Among other privileges, this grant entitled Morgan's Louisiana & Texas Railroad and Steam Ship Company to construct a double railroad track running along Berwick Bay to the proposed wharf extension and continuing northward to the foot of Everett Street. This track later was extended up Berwick Bay, crossing the project area under consideration here.

At that time, as before, Brashear City was the terminus of the railroad, and commerce and transportation further west necessarily were accomplished by steamboats. Morgan's fleet of steamships operating in this trade included the steamers Matagorda, Alabama, I.C. Harris, Harlan, Clinton, and St. Mary. The latter two weighed about one thousand gross tons each, and had "fairly good passenger accommodations" (Jungen 1930:1). Between 1870 and 1872, the Morgan Line added to its service the fourteen hundred ton side wheeler Hutchinson, the thirteen hundred ton steamers Whitney and Josephine, and the SS. Gussie. The Whitney and the Josephine later were placed in the Cuban and Mexican trade (Jungen 1930:1).

Initially, the steamers that used the Brashear City port were light draft, since the channel into Berwick Bay limited access to vessels drawing less than seven and one-half feet. Once through the channel, however, Berwick Bay provided sufficient depths for easy docking. In 1871, Charles Morgan undertook the dredging of the Bay Ship Channel in the lower Atchafalaya River. "Morgan's Ditch," as the channel became known, was six miles long, from one hundred and twenty to two hundred feet wide, and ten feet deep. The dredging operation took two years, and it is reputed to have cost one million dollars. The results of this operation also were impressive. By 1873, seventeen Morgan Line vessels alone called

from Brashear City to points along the Gulf Coast. In that year, the Congress of the United States made Brashear City a Port of Entry.

In 1876, the Louisiana legislature renamed the town of Brashear "Morgan City," in recognition of Charles Morgan's contribution to the economic growth and viability of the port. A census taken one year earlier showed about two thousand residents in the town. After Morgan's channel improvements, maritime trade and the transshipment of goods accelerated rapidly. In 1876, fully twelve per cent (2000 hhds) of the St. Mary Parish sugar crop and fourteen per cent (3200 bbls) of its molasses production cleared Morgan City in chartered schooners bound to Charleston and New York. Live oak timber reserved by the United States Government for shipbuilding left Morgan City for Navy yards in Washington, D.C., Brooklyn, San Francisco, and Kittery, Maine. The cargo schooners that carried this timber arrived in Morgan City in ballast, and this rock ballast was used to fill the bay front of Front Street, which was seriously eroding at that time (St. Clair 1908).

The opportunity for such maritime commerce stimulated a flurry of development along Morgan City's bay front. The first efforts to begin wharf construction directly adjacent to the project area are indicated in an 1872 petition by William Jones to construct an ice house and wharf beginning at the foot of Greenwood Street and continuing north to the center of Lot thirteen in square thirty-nine (Figure 7; Council Proceedings 1873:51-52). In 1874, building requirements for wharf construction were outlined in an ordinance authorizing the Mayor and the Committee on Streets and Landings to grant wharf privileges lasting for a number of years. This ordinance stipulated that no wharf was to be constructed unless it was on pins or posts of hewn timber and on an abutment built of clean earth, the sides and ends of which were to have been of hewn timber (Record of Ordinances 1874:67-68).

The first record of wharf construction within the project area directly overlying the Morgan City boat site is indicated in a lease granting wharf privileges to Chester B. Darrall in 1875. Darrall's twenty five year lease encompassed:

the bank of Berwick Bay commencing at the upper side of Freret Street and running up said Bay one hundred and fifty feet including the front of Lots number "12" "13" and "14" in Square No. 34 for the purpose of erecting a wharf over the margin of the Bay (Record of Ordinances 1875:73).

This may be the same wharf indicated in the earliest available Sanborn map, dated 1885 (Figure 7).

Expansion of the railroad system in Morgan City continued in 1877, when a city ordinance granted Morgan's Louisiana & Texas Railroad the right to lay a single railroad track "from the south side of Everett Street along the margin of the bay-front, on Front Street till (sic) it reaches the upper limits of Freret Street" (Council Proceedings 1877:233). This track was to be graded to

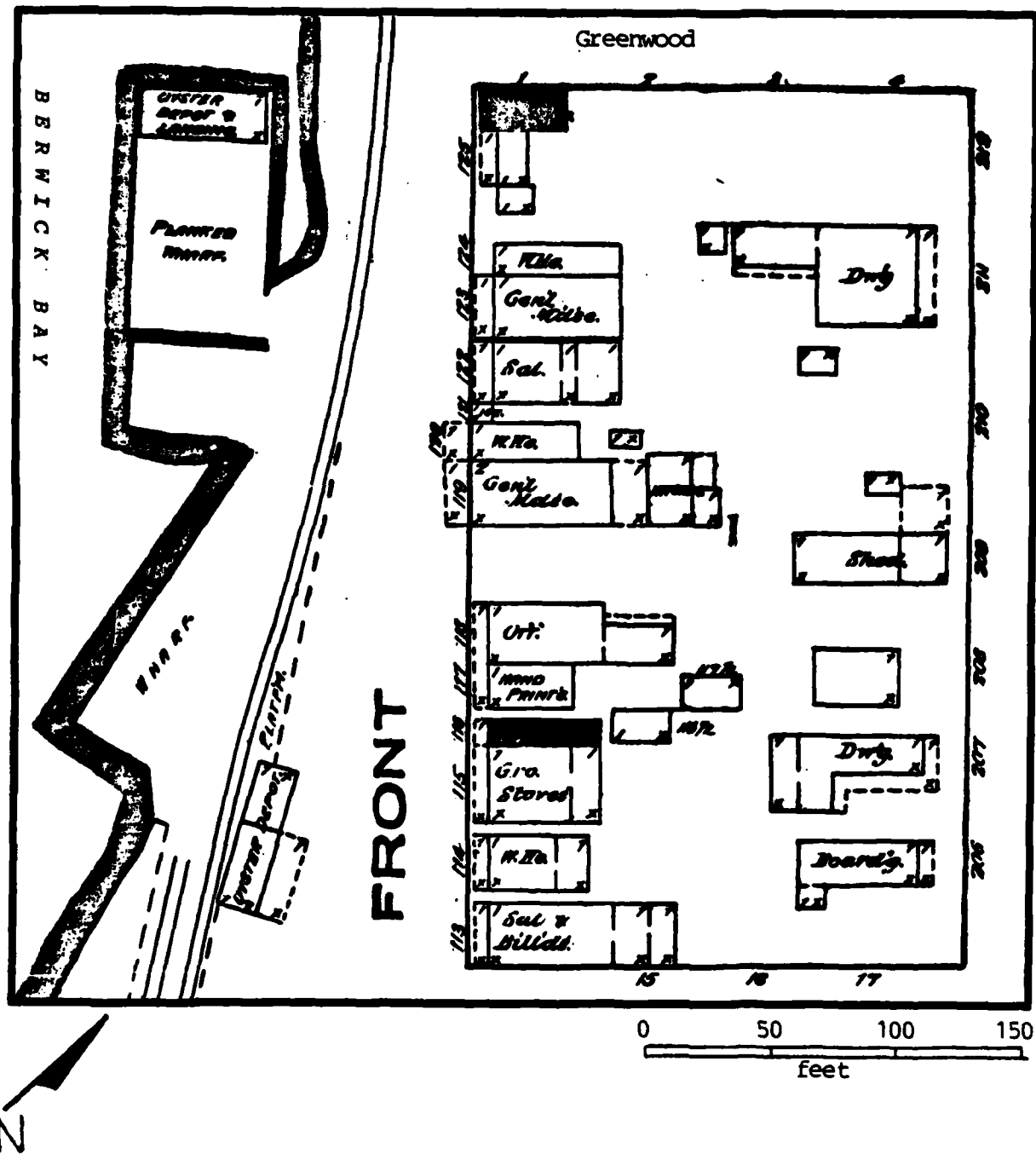


Figure 7. Excerpt of the 1885 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of Morgan City, showing waterfront buildings in the project area between Greenwood and Freret Streets.

correspond with the height of the existing wharf on Front Street. The railroad company was directed to "fill up the streets to the bank head where the railway passes" (Council Proceedings 1877:233).

In 1880, this railway was continued northward by virtue of a lease carrying similar conditions to the 1877 ordinance:

the provisions, conditions and considerations of this grant are, that the said track shall not be placed any nearer the line of the sidewalk than twenty feet and the said Rail Road and S.S. Co. obligate themselves to promptly fill with earth to the level of the street and out to the bank head or breakwater, along said line of track, so far as their track extends and to build such bank-head from Loeb's wharf to north side of Brashear Avenue and to fill the same with earth as specified free of expense to the City, should they run their track so far and the cars upon said track shall not be left standing so as to unnecessarily obstruct or prevent persons or vehicles passing to and from the ferry and to and from private and city wharves. And the Rail Road and S.S. Co. shall put down good box drains under their track on both sides of any streets the said track crosses (Record of Ordinances 1880:115-116).

The right-of-way for this track extension began at the terminus of the existing rail at the north side of Freret Street and continued up Front Street nine hundred feet to the north side of Brashear Avenue (COB T, Folio 688, St. Mary Parish).

In 1882, the first railroad bridge across Berwick Bay was completed. The first train from New Orleans to San Antonio arrived on February 6, 1883; its counterpart train from San Francisco arrived in San Antonio on February 7, 1883. Thus, through train service from New Orleans to California was begun, signaling the beginning of the end of Morgan City's major role in the steamship era. An 1891 report by Capt. W.L. Fisk to the Chief of Engineers noted that only two Morgan Line steamships were left in Morgan City; one of these traded with Texas ports at ten day intervals, while the other plied the Veracruz trade one time every two weeks.

The opening date of the railroad bridge across Berwick Bay also may be viewed as the commencement date of Morgan City's oyster industry. A city ordinance in 1883 provided for expansion of the oyster trade. It was:

An ordinance to encourage the oyster business within the limits of the City and to grant all facilities to our citizens who are engaged or may hereafter engage in said business and to

authorize the construction on the River Bank  
of all buildings to carry on such trade  
(Record of Ordinances 1883:135)

This ordinance was instrumental in the construction of oyster factories, depots and landings over the Morgan City boat site under consideration here. The 1885 Sanborn map (Figure 7) shows both wharves and oyster depots on the bayside of Square thirty-four. The 1883 ordinance also stipulated that all oyster shells were to be donated to the city; most were used to fill along the bay front.

The oyster industry flourished during the latter part of the century in Morgan City. The oyster factory of the Lehmann family was the largest. In 1887, that factory shucked and shipped an average of 300,000 oysters per week; in December, 1886, one customer alone bought between two and three million oysters from the Lehmanns. Wells, Fargo & Co. reported that from September 1, 1886, to May 1, 1887, 13,571,428 oysters were shipped from Morgan City.

In 1890, John Dalton was granted

the use of the river front, in front of the property now occupied by the said Dalton as a store and situated at the corner of Front and Freret Street in Morgan City and also of the property occupied by Dalton and belonging to Darrall & Miller on Front Street, Morgan City, with the privilege to construct piers, wharves, fish and oyster houses necessary to conduct his business and to occupy the same free of all cost and expense to the City, for the term and period of ten years (COB Z, Folio 459, St. Mary Parish).

This grant again reflected the desires of the Mayor and Councilmen to "promote & encourage the growth of the oyster and fish industry in Morgan City and invite capital and labor among its people" (COB Z, Folio 459, St. Mary Parish). John Dalton's oyster factories in and adjacent to the present project area (Figure 8) continue to appear on Sanborn Insurance maps through 1899 (Figures 9 and 10).

Development of properties adjacent to the project area continued after 1893, when William B. Gray purchased the Berwick Bay Packing Company Limited from E.A. Landry and L.A. Landry. Included in this purchase were the packing house, located on the bay front at the foot of Greenwood street, and "all the buckets, tubs, cans, tools, implements, and paraphernalia pertaining thereto and connected with the oyster packing business" (COB CC, Folio 733, St. Mary Parish). Because of a pending suit (St. Clair vs. the Berwick Bay Packing Company, Ltd.), Gray was prevented from engaging in the oyster trade during the 1893 and 1894 seasons. However, further development of his property was not restricted as seen in an 1894 ordinance granting wharf building privileges for:

that part or portion of the river or bay front  
of Morgan City La. extending (in) front of the

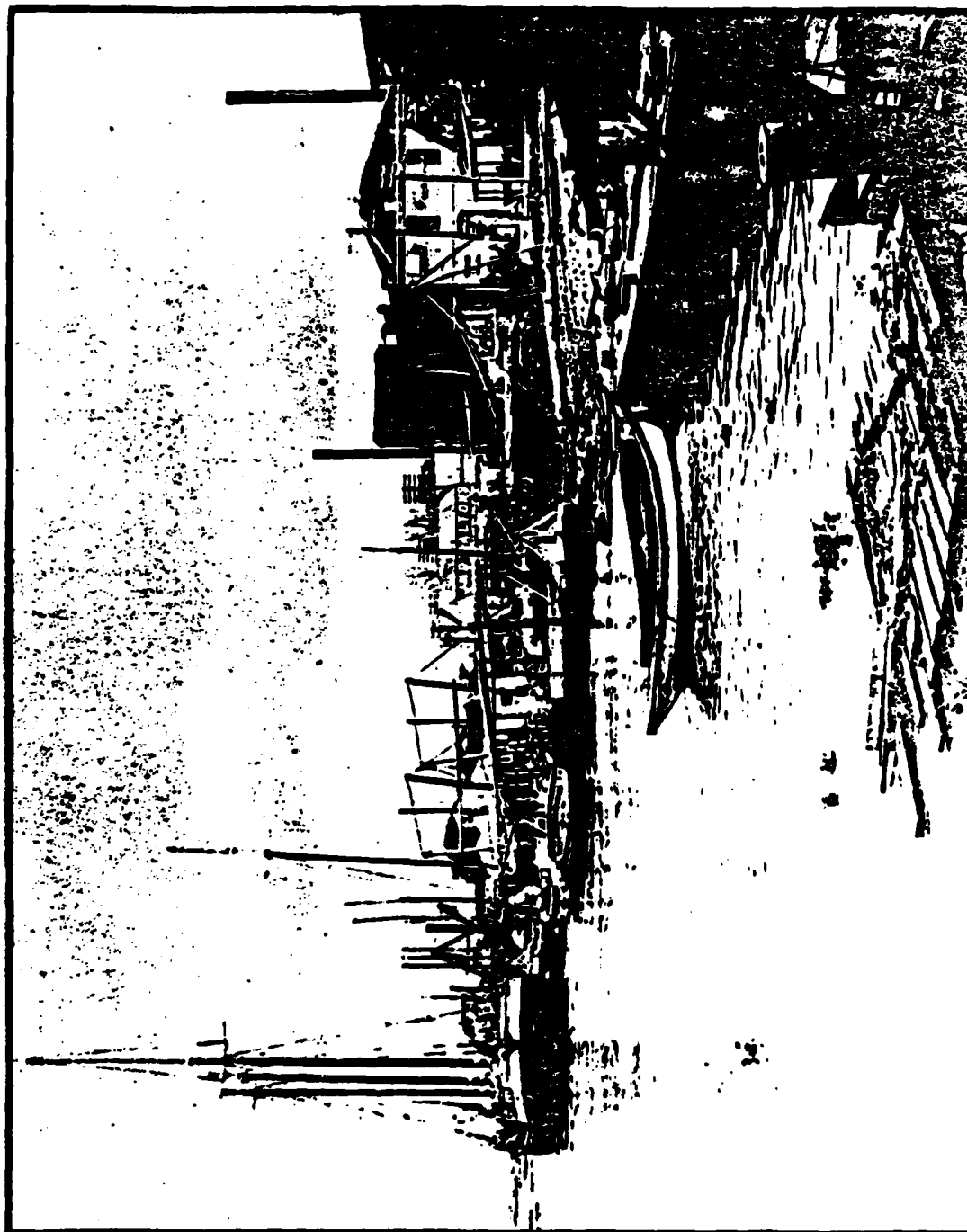


Figure 8. View of the Morgan City waterfront from the wharf, showing one of Dalton's oyster factories and a large three-masted schooner adjacent to the project area (Morgan City Archives).





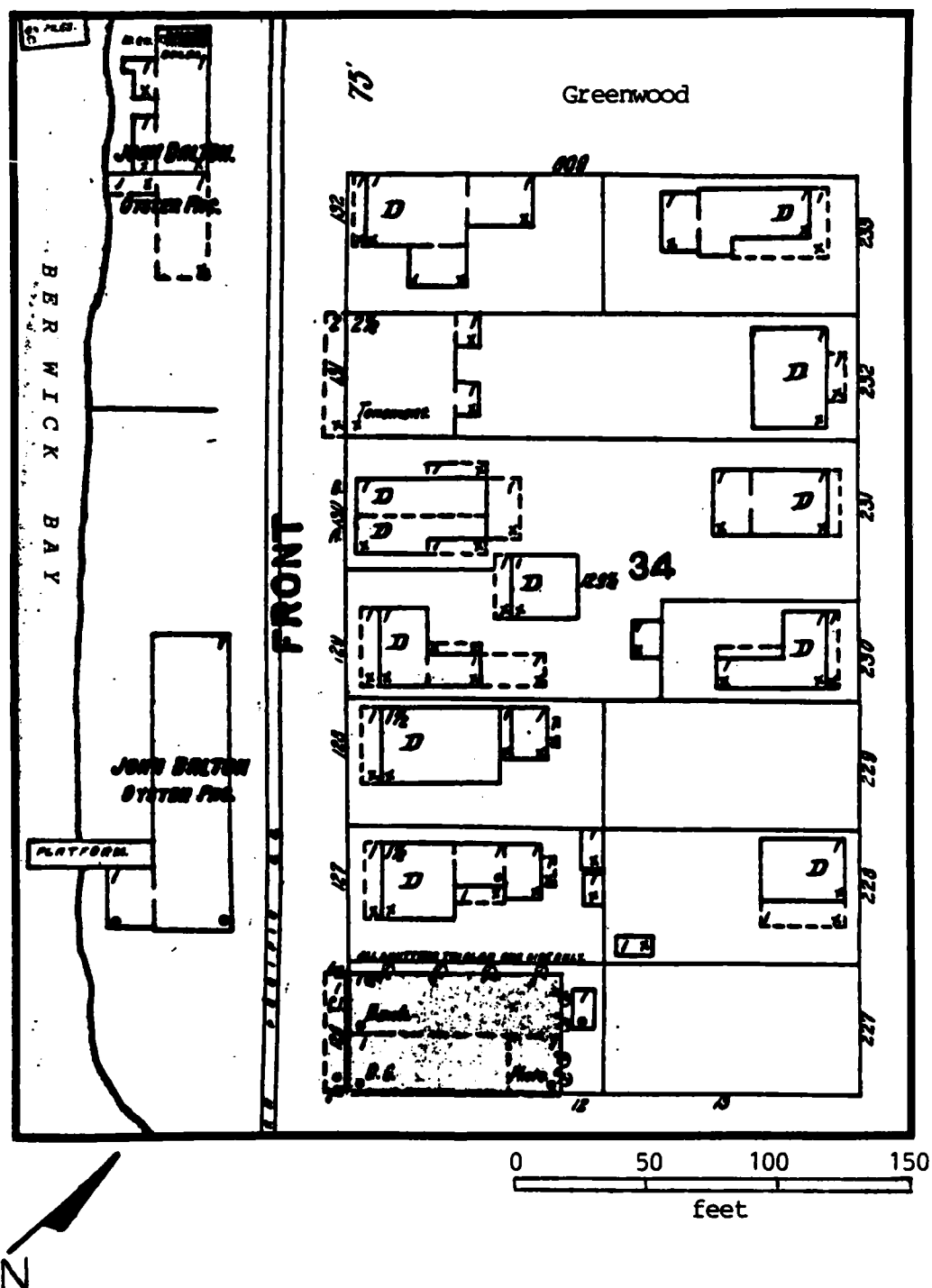


Figure 10. Excerpt of 1899 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of Morgan City, showing waterfront buildings in the project area between Greenwood and Freret Streets.

lower line of Lot number nine (9) in Square number thirty four (34) to the front of the upper line of Lot number fourteen (14) in Square number thirty nine (39) and adjoining the grants made to John Dalton in the South and William Drews in the North (COB DD, Folio 676, St. Mary Parish).

This grant stipulated that it was

... made in consideration that said W.B. Gray shall as soon as possible fill in and bank the front in a substantial manner for commercial purposes and protection against caveing (sic) all the leased property herein described, with oyster shells to be well packed and supported with piling if necessary (COB DD, Folio 476, St. Mary Parish).

These stipulations to ordinances granting wharf privileges in the project area beginning in 1883 clearly established a precedent whereby bank fill in the form of oyster shells was reciprocal and necessary to construction along the bay front. Subsequent bulkheading and land filling activities effectively sealed the site of the Morgan City boat, making a later introduction of a shipwreck into the project area unlikely if not impossible. By 1906, Dalton's factories and depots were replaced by a small shipyard which included wharves, a boat house, and a ship carpenter and builder's shop (Figure 11). A map included in a 1911 contract between Morgan City and Morgan's Louisiana & Texas Railroad & Steamship Company (Figure 12) shows "J. Parmalee & Sons Boat Manufacturers" occupying the shipyard buildings on the waterfront. This contract provided for a shift of the existing "Brownell & Drews Lumber Company Spur" track twenty feet to the west (towards Berwick Bay). The 1912 Sanborn map (Figure 13) shows a "ship carpenter & builder" still occupying the waterfront buildings. By 1919, those waterfront buildings formed part of the Johnson & Hamilton Garage & Machine Shop. The railroad track shift described in the 1911 contract with the railroad company also had been realized by 1919 (Figures 12 & 14). A floating ferry landing at the foot of Freret Street appears on both the 1912 and 1919 Sanborn maps. Two wharves were added by 1919; one of these was located in front of Lot twelve, Square thirty-four, and the other, that of the "Inland Barge Line," was a freight dock in front of Lot 8, Square 34.

By 1927, an extensive planked wharf was present in the project area in front of Lots 8 through 12 (Figure 15). At that time, the Inland Barge Line wharf is listed as a "warehouse." The ferry landing at the foot of Freret Street was still extant, but the small boat house formerly associated with the boat yard is gone.

The 1940 Sanborn map (Figure 16) depicts land use similar to that found at present. The 1940 concrete seawall can be seen extending over the site. A Coast Guard hut (Figure 17) has been added to the planked wharf in front of Lot 8, Square 34, and the wharf itself now extends to Freret Street (Figure 18).

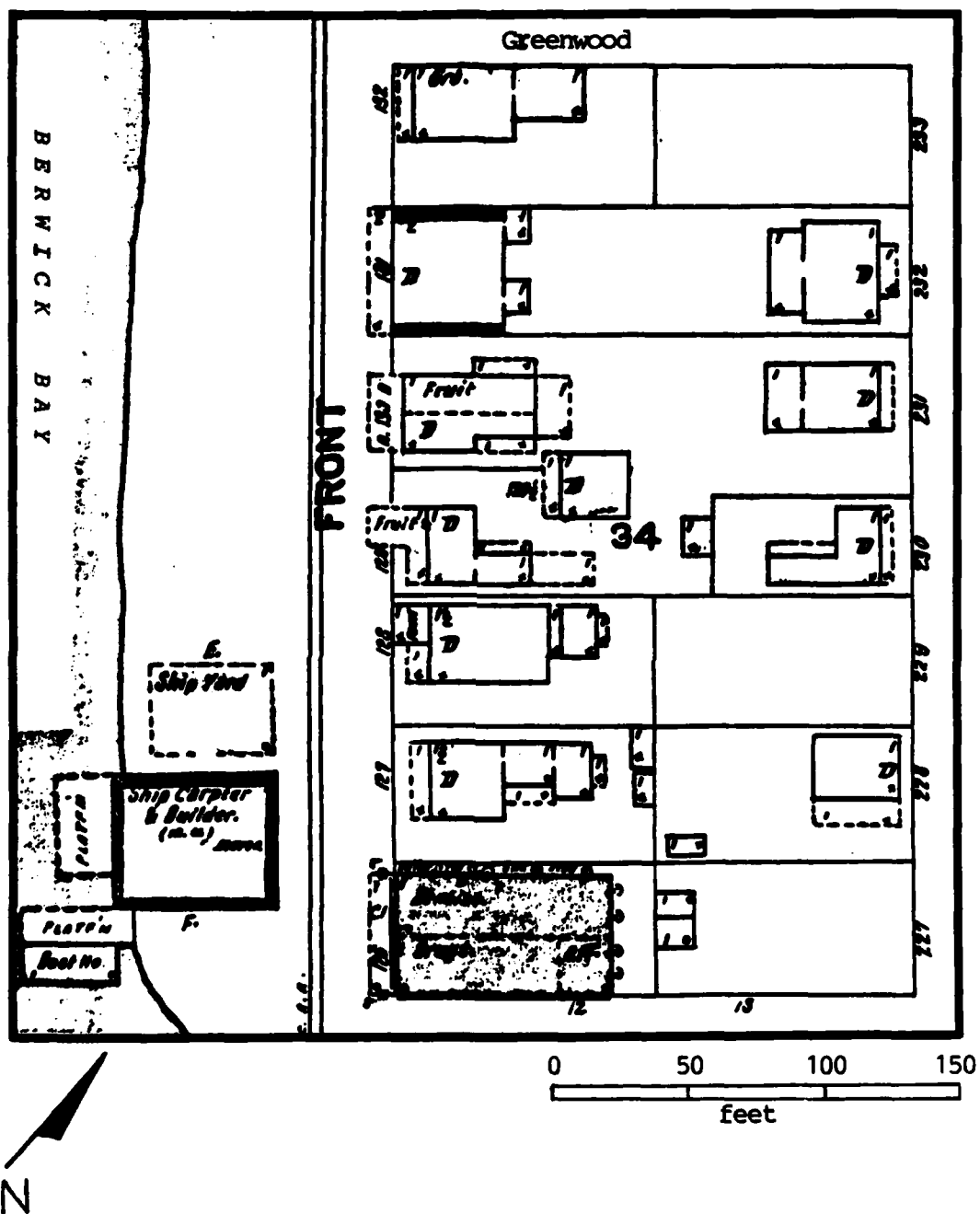
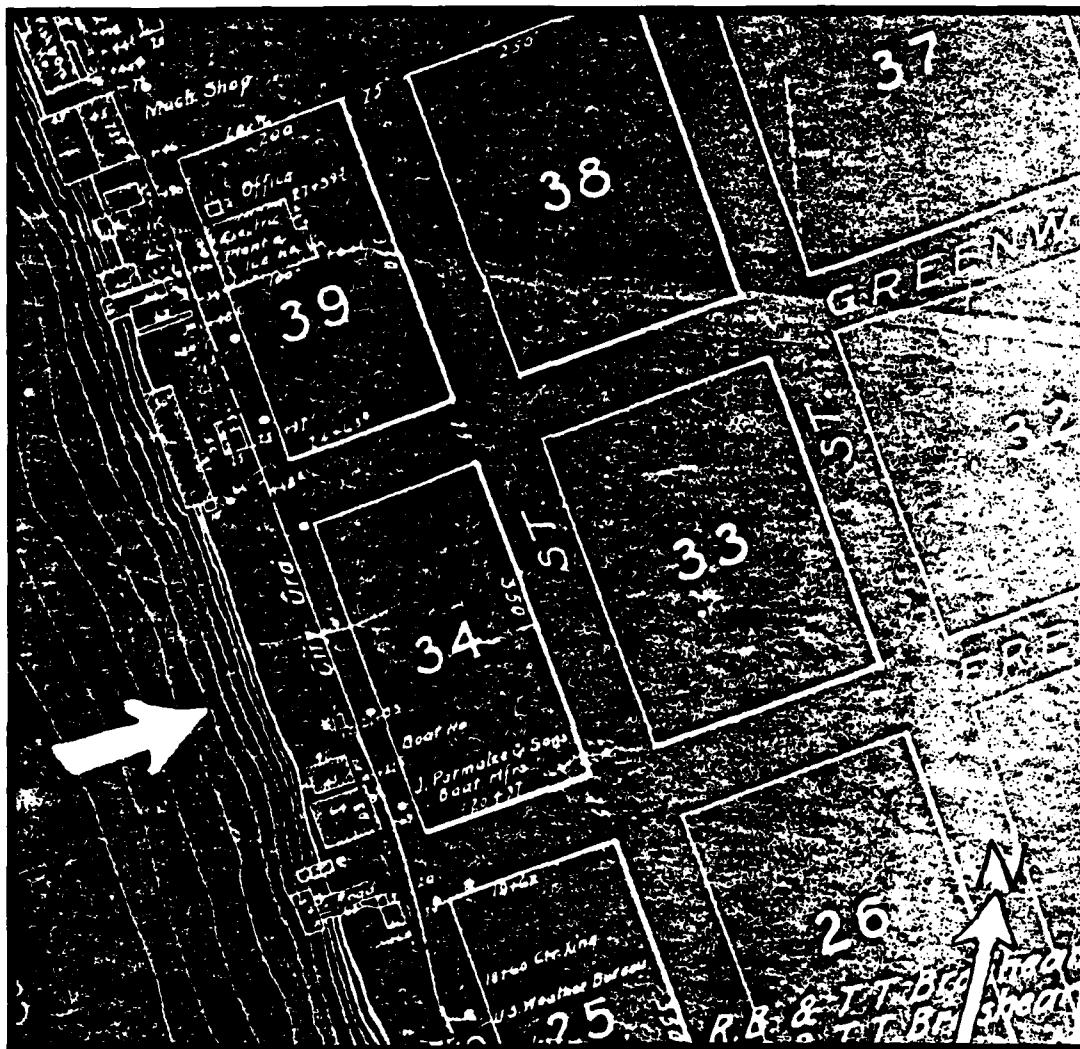


Figure 11. Excerpt of 1906 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of Morgan City, showing waterfront buildings in the project area between Greenwood and Freret Streets.



Scale not available

Figure 12. Excerpt of map included in 1911 contract between Morgan City and Morgan's Louisiana and Texas Railroad and Steamship Company, showing proposed track alignment crossing the project area between Greenwood and Freret Streets (Morgan City Archives).



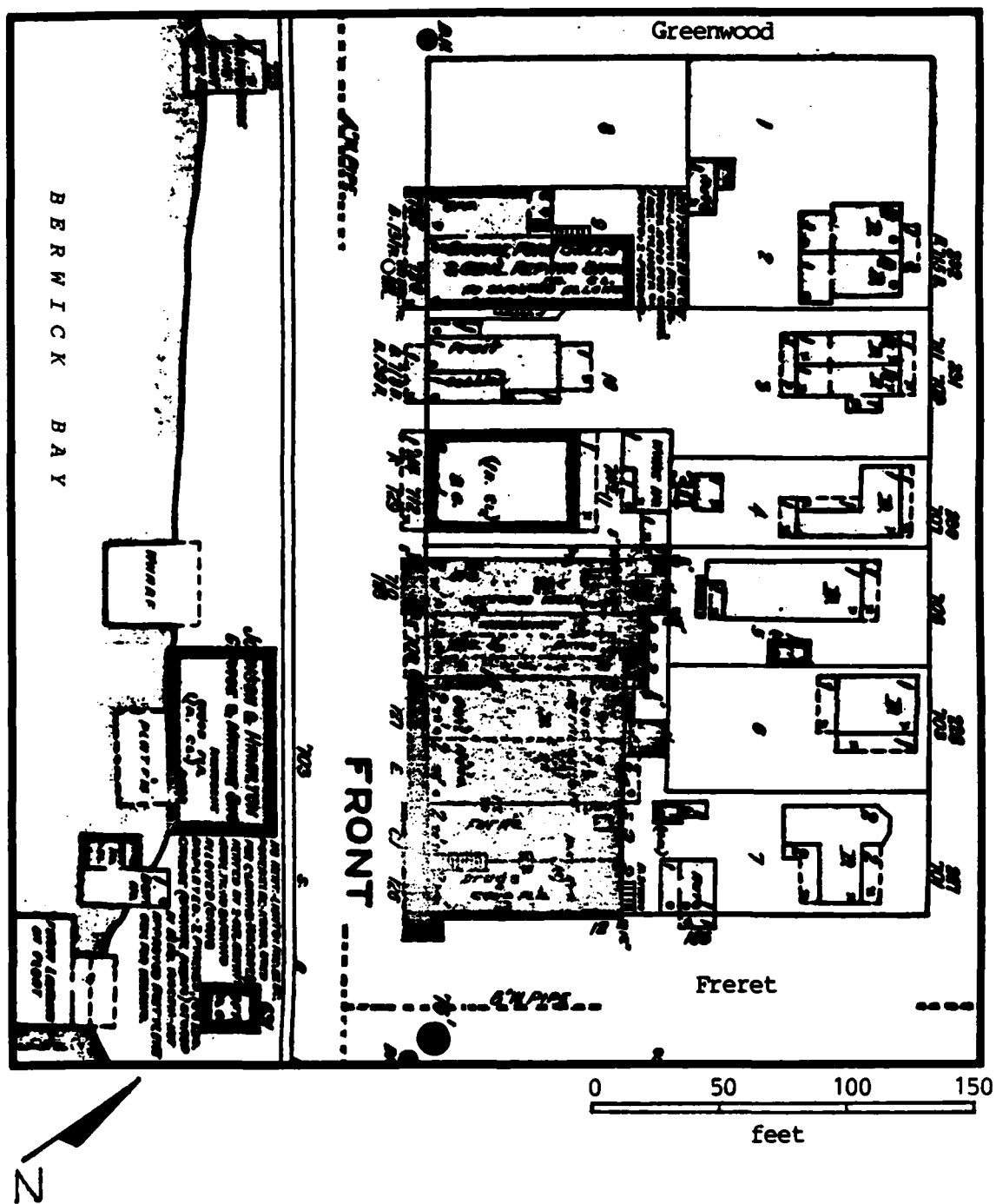


Figure 14. Excerpt of 1919 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of Morgan City, showing waterfront buildings in the project area between Greenwood and Freret Streets.

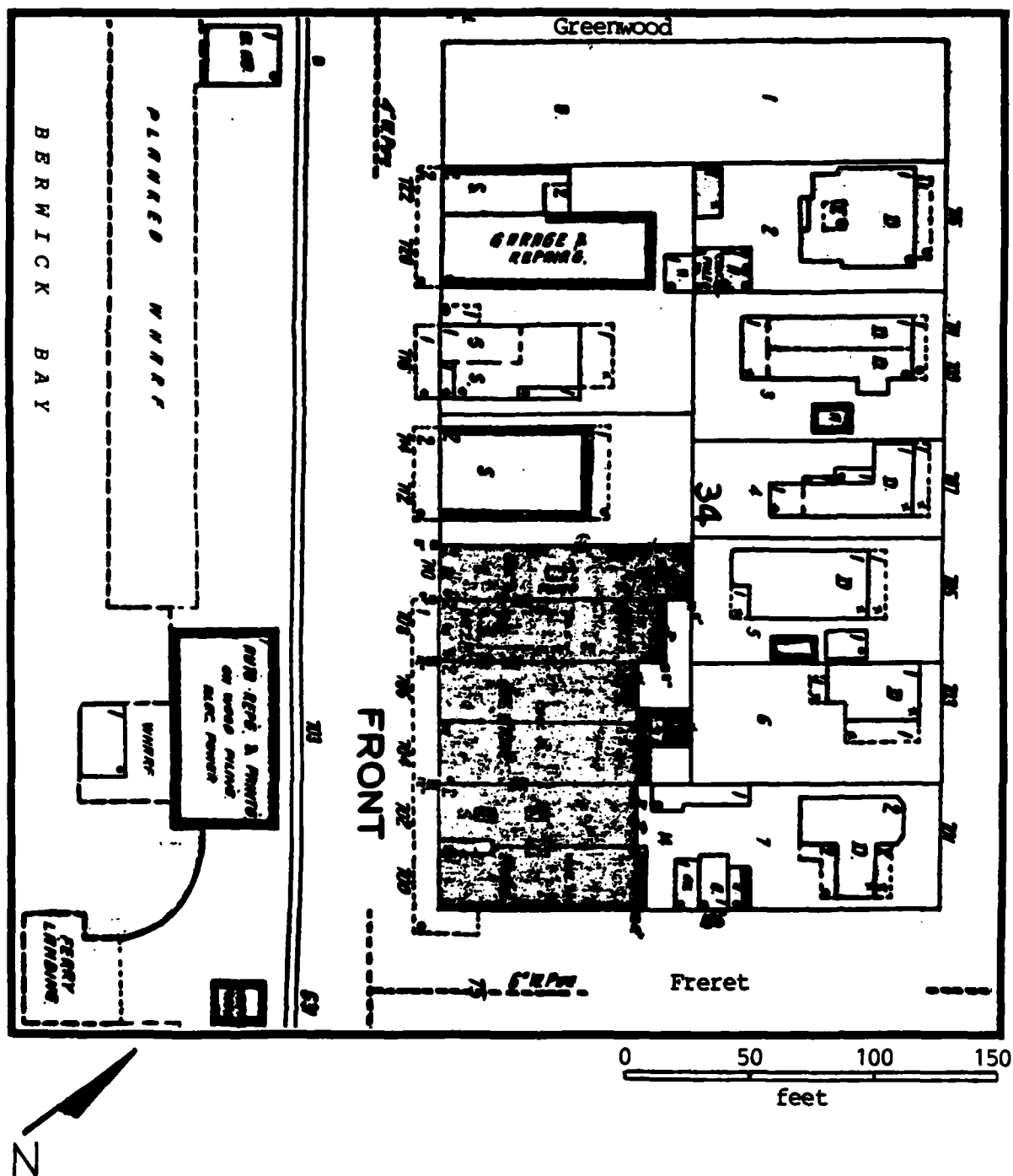


Figure 15. Excerpt of 1927 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of Morgan City, showing waterfront buildings in the project area between Greenwood and Freret Streets.



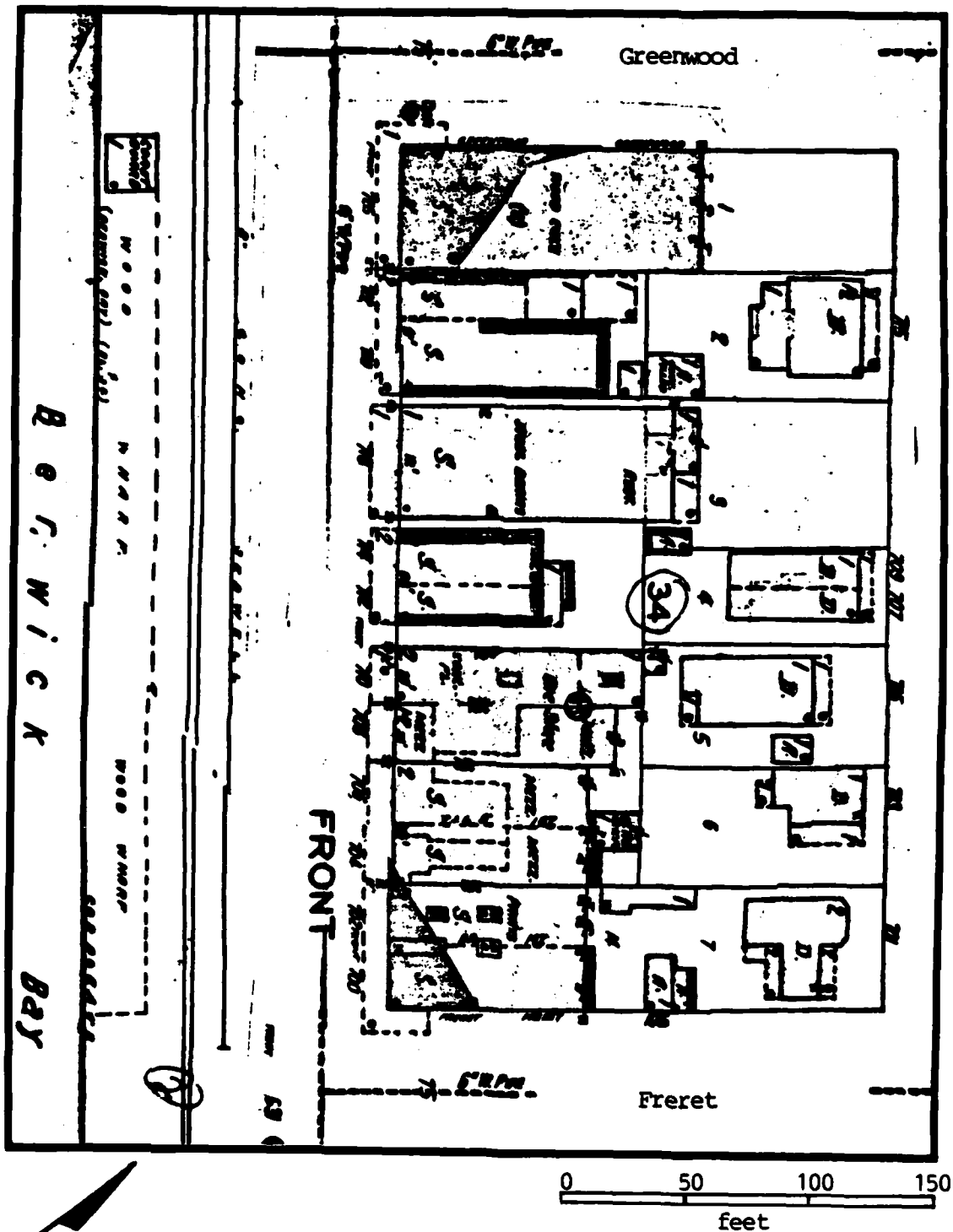


Figure 16. Excerpt of 1940 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of Morgan City, showing waterfront buildings in the project area between Greenwood and Freret Streets.

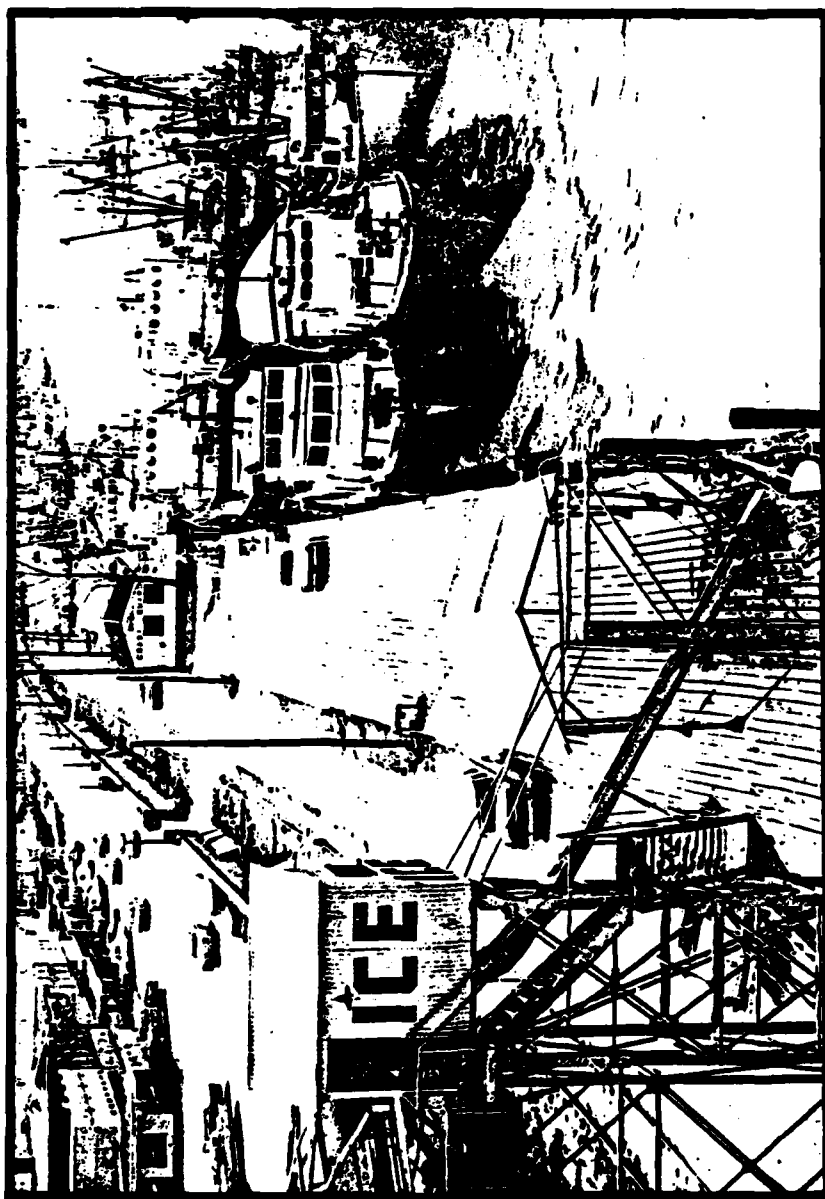


Figure 17. View of the Morgan City waterfront during the 1950s, showing wharf facilities and U.S. Coast Guard station in the project area (Morgan City Archives).

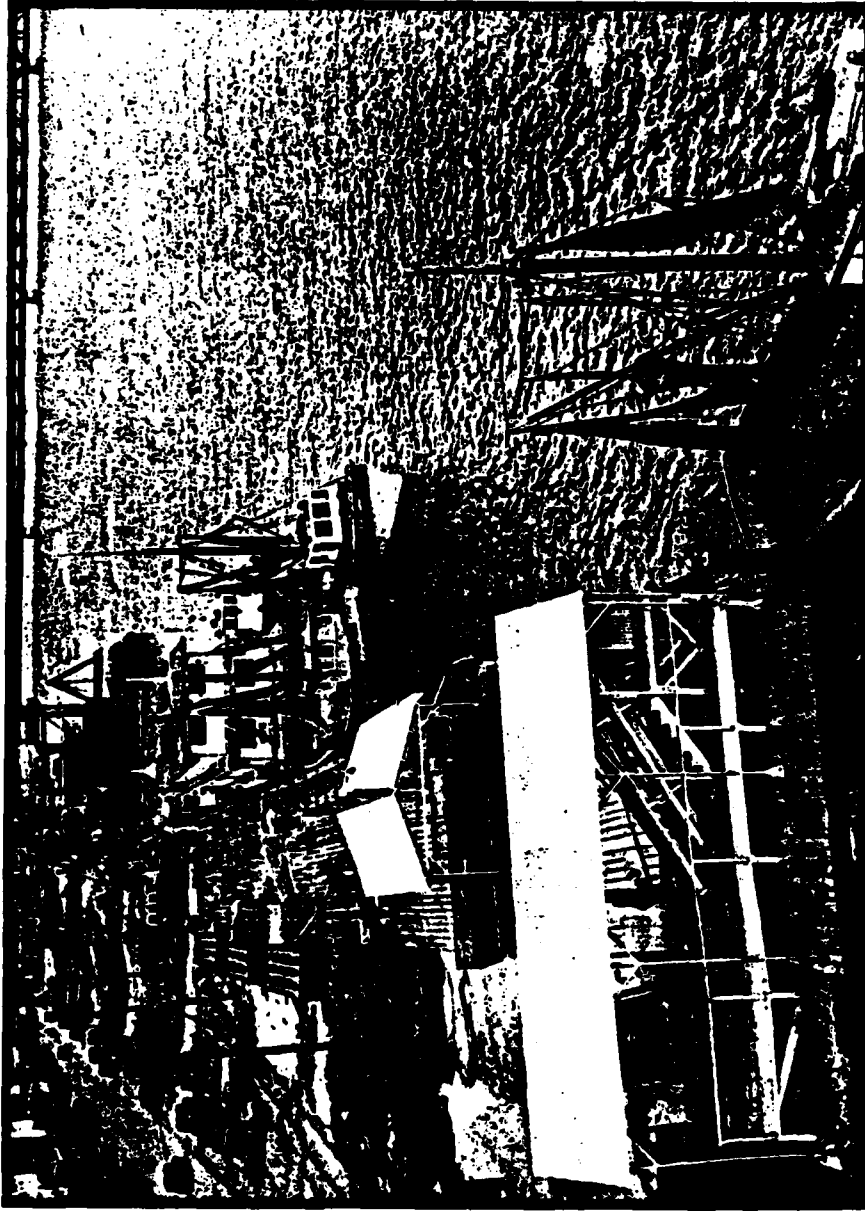


Figure 18. View of the Morgan City waterfront during the 1940s showing wharf facilities, railroad spur, and commercial fishing vessels adjacent to the project area (Morgan City Archives).

## CHAPTER VI

### FIELD RESEARCH AT THE MORGAN CITY BOAT SITE

After completion of archival research, and when the stage of the Lower Atchafalaya had dropped to a sufficient level to permit removal of water from a portion of the construction trench containing the Morgan City floodwall boat site, field work was begun. The objectives of the field phase of research were the identification and recordation of the remains in question.

A site plan of the project area is shown in Figure 19. The site area was bounded on one side by the old floodwall, and on the river side by a balk comprised largely of oyster shell fill deposited during the heyday of Morgan City's once lucrative oyster trade. As noted previously, the remains of a boat or boats were observed by Corps of Engineers personnel during construction of the new floodwall at Morgan City; the site was encountered during the placement of sheet piling in the floodwall construction trench. Shortly after the site was discovered, the river flooded the construction trench, preventing visual inspection of the remains.

After the river level had fallen, water continued to be the major impediment to field work; the differential between low water and the site still was three feet. Thus, the initial problem confronting the field crew was draining the trench sufficiently to permit visual inspection of the remains. This situation was compounded by breaches in the shell balk that existed between the river and the site; two such breaches were present, north and south of the project area. Using two stationary six inch pumps, placed in excavated sump holes, and a third, portable pump (Figure 20), water level was lowered to several inches above the floor of the construction trench.

Using the centerline of the new floodwall as a north - south baseline, grid control was established across the "no work" area; the site area was staked at 5 m intervals (Figure 19). In addition, grid locations were marked with flagging paint along both the old floodwall and the sheet piling that bisected the construction trench. Following establishment of provenience controls, the length of the exposed trench was probed for evidence of sunken timbers. Continuous timbers were discerned in the area of the site known to contain the remains of a boat or boats; after pumping, two large parallel timbers were visible, and these timbers delimited the area of observed articulated timbers (Figure 21).

However, wood was encountered in probe tests at irregular intervals across the entire project area. As will be seen, wood fill was used to build up the bankline along Front Street in Morgan City on several occasions historically; the construction trench was replete with scrap wood, as well as the remnants of collapsed wharves. Unfortunately, the water level in the trench could not be reduced enough to permit visual inspection of all individual wooden probe targets. Three of these targets that could be examined visually (Features 002, 004, 005) were found to be the

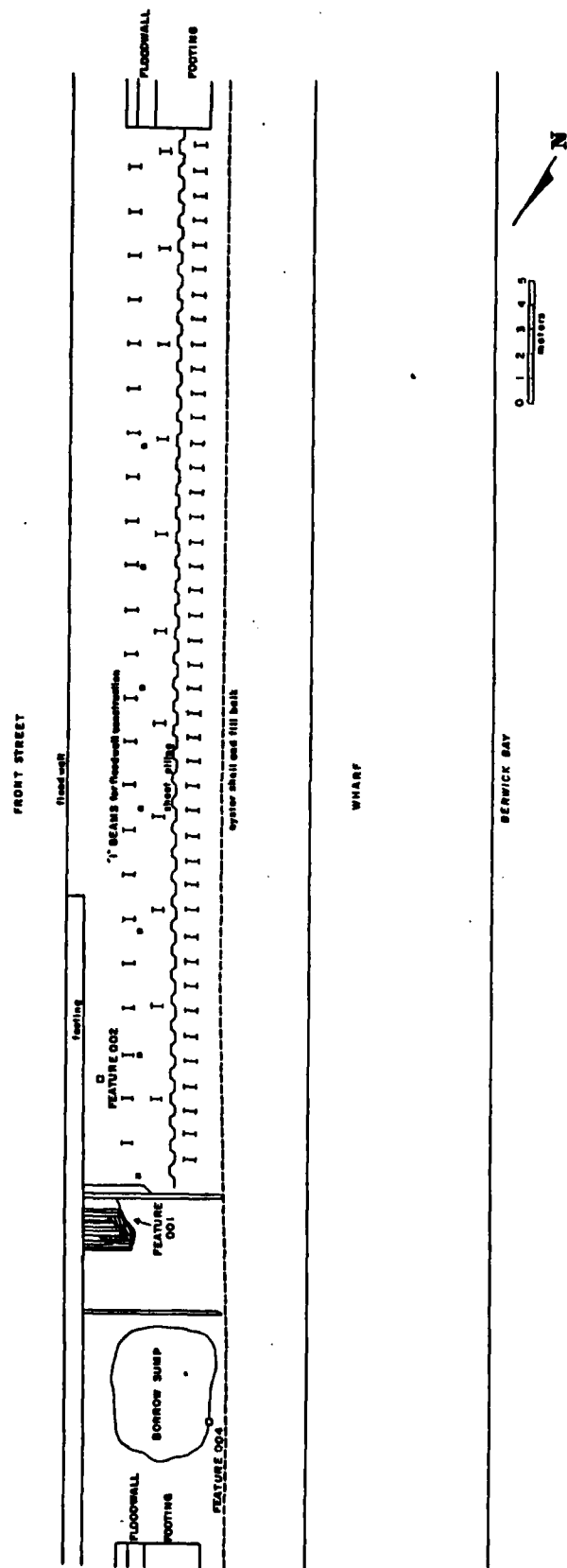


FIGURE 19. PLAN OF THE MORGAN CITY FLOODWALL BOAT SITE.





Figure 20. Sump hole containing a portable six inch pump, and showing oyster shell fill overburden in the construction trench at the Morgan City floodwall boat site (see also Figure 19).

remains of former wharf piling supports.

Because of field conditions at the construction trench, excavation of the area known to contain articulated timbers required the building of a series of balks and ditches (Figures 21 and 22). Substantial numbers of the oyster shells that covered the entire trench area were removed from the area 12 - 14.7S, 0.8 - 6.5 W. These shells were placed in balks around the feature under investigation, and ditches were used to further drain the area (Figure 21). After removal of the oyster shell and silt overburden from this portion of the site, disarticulated and articulated finished cypress planks became visible. This feature, designated F001, then was excavated using standard archeological techniques, with the exception that recordation and photographic documentation required continuous bailing. Excavation of this feature revealed parts of the deck, hull, and structural members of a small vessel that will be described in detail shortly. In addition, this excavation elucidated the stratigraphy of the Morgan City boat site.

The stratigraphy of Feature 001 is shown in Figure 23. The salient aspect of this profile from a chronological point of view is that a dense oyster shell overburden was located above the vessel in question, while the basal strata below the vessel were comprised of a silty clay matrix containing only very small quantities of oyster shell. In fact, the basal portion of the wreckage appeared to lie at the interface between dense oyster shell fill above and silty clay below. In addition to oyster shell, small ballast stones were found intermixed in the overburden fill but not in the underlying clay. The absence of a heavy concentration of oyster shell below the timbers suggests that the wreckage existed in situ during the early period of the systematic fill of the waterfront using oyster shells.

A second characteristic of the stratigraphy of F001 was the presence of burned sawdust above the wreckage (Figure 23), where it was intermixed with the oyster shell fill. Sawdust also was found inside the wreckage, between the deck (ceiling) planking and the hull. That sawdust, though, was not burned. Sawdust below the hull of the vessel was largely unburned, although several pockets of charred wood and sawdust remains were found below the wreckage. The origin of these sawdust deposits will be treated subsequently.

The presence of dense oyster shell fill above but apparently not below the Morgan City boat provides a very useful tool for chronological reconstruction, because the beginning of large scale oyster shell fill activities along Morgan City's waterfront can be dated with precision. As noted previously, city ordinances restricting disposal of oyster shells in Morgan (Brashear) City date from 1874, and specific ordinances granting wharf privileges in the project area in return for the use of shucked oyster shells to fill the bank of Berwick Bay along Front Street began in the early 1880s. Thus, the presence of large quantities of oyster shells from the commercial fisheries in a stratigraphic cross section of Berwick Bay provides a sort of horizon marker that may be measured in real time against the statutory record of city grants and ordinances. The aforementioned 1883 ordinance governed oyster shell disposal in the area, and, large oyster depots and attendant





Figure 21. Photograph of the construction trench in August, 1984, showing two large timbers running perpendicular to the trench; these timbers delimited the area found to contain articulated timbers.



Figure 22. View of the construction trench looking north  
(grid), during dewatering activities.

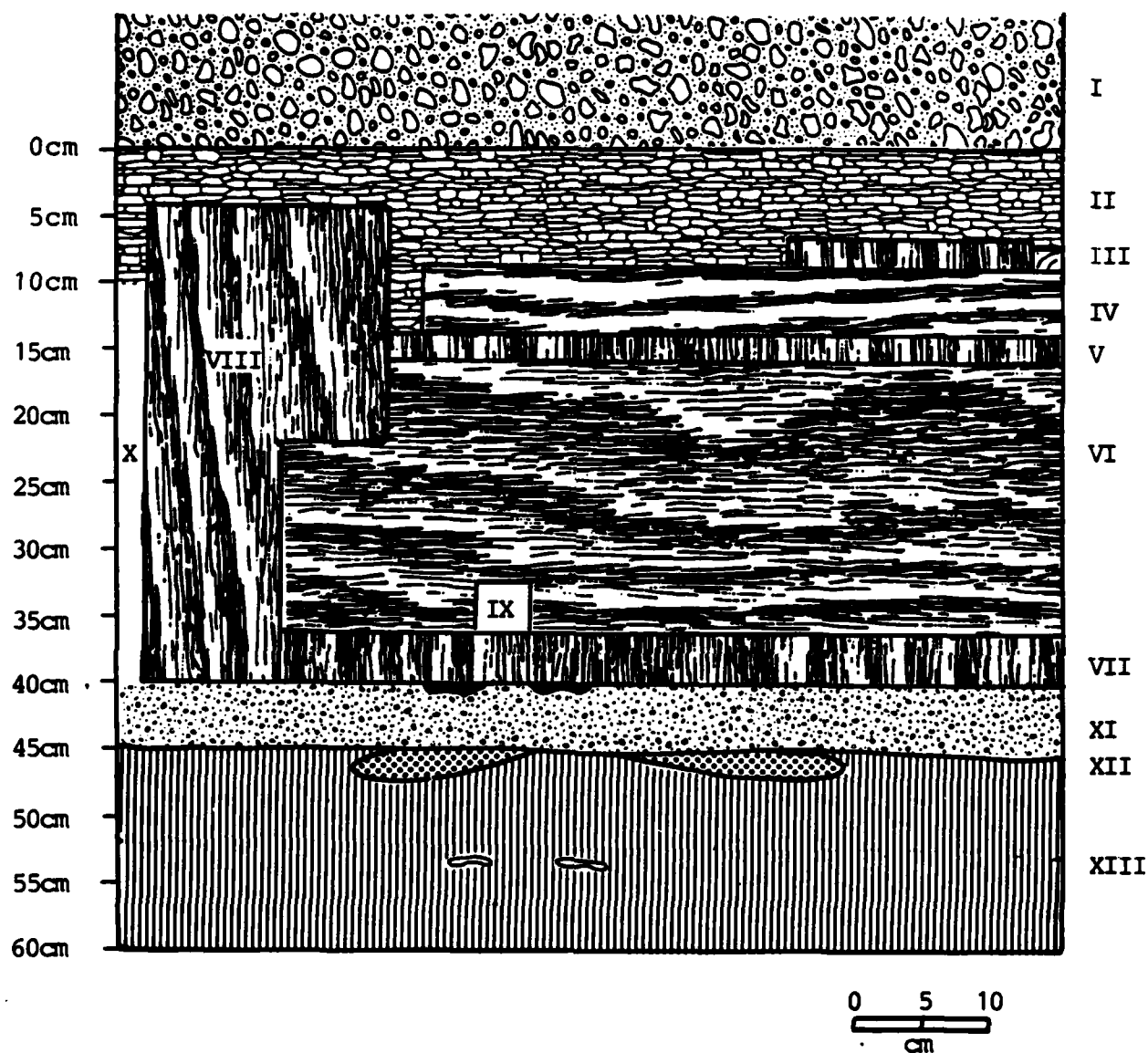


Figure 23. Stratigraphic cross section of the vessel observed in Feature 001.

### KEY TO FIGURE 23

- I Floodwall
- II Oyster shell and sawdust overburden
- III Loose boards
- IV Loose timber
- V Ceiling
- VI Floor timber
- VII Hull planking
- VIII Chine (longitudinal or side girder)
- IX Limber hole (waterway)
- X Unexcavated area
- XI Silty clay and sawdust
- XII Charcoal
- XIII Silty clay containing several oyster shells

wharf facilities in and flanking the project area are shown on the 1885 Sanborn map of Morgan City (Figure 7). Given the observed stratigraphic placement of the vessel(s) in question, the last decade of the nineteenth century, or ca. 1895, can be ascribed as a terminus post quem for the Morgan City boat.

The stratigraphic setting of the Morgan City boat, in conjunction with historical information, similarly may be used to estimate a rough terminus ante quem for the vessel. Clearly, the rate of siltation during the nineteenth century in Berwick Bay and the effect of settling of the wreck on its exact stratigraphic placement cannot be measured at this time. Nevertheless, the location of the wreck at the interface of the oyster shell fill and a silty clay substratum indicates a strong probability that the vessel was deposited either just prior to or not long after the commencement of shell filling. Using the city's historic record of wharf construction in the project area as a guideline, the early 1870s can be ascribed as a rough terminus ante quem for the deposition of the wreckage. The stratigraphic setting of the Morgan City floodwall boat site, then, provides about a twenty year bracket for the deposition of the vessel in question. In other words, the Morgan City floodwall boat dates from the period between 1872 and 1895.

The bulk of field work at the Morgan City boat site involved the excavation and recordation of the vessel remains at Feature 001. Although large scale excavation was not feasible because of the physical condition of the site, an attempt was made to sample that vessel sufficiently to permit recognition and classification of its structural configuration.

The setting of the Morgan City boat also elucidated a set of destructive agents that had impacted the vessel since its deposition. The old floodwall was built on top of part of the vessel (Figure 23), causing collapse of some structural members. Installation of sheet pilings and I-beams, along with excavation of the construction trench for the new floodwall, further impacted the site, and precluded additional excavation in other areas, notably in the northern portion of the construction trench where a deep sump hole had been dug (Figures 19 and 20). Finally, years of refuse disposal along Morgan City's waterfront, undertaken in order to stabilize the bankline there prior to construction of the old floodwall, had damaged part of the vessel, and placed substantial amounts of waste lumber on and around it.

A final phase of field work involved monitoring of the excavation of the construction trench between the completed segments of the new floodwall. On August 12, 1984, a .93 x 2.28 m bucket mounted on an American 5530 "Amhoist" Crane was used to dredge a channel along the length of the construction trench, to enable installation of the final floodwall segment. During the course of this excavation, which was one bucket wide and about 15 m long, articulated and disarticulated timbers from the F001 area were retrieved from the construction trench. These timbers were placed adjacent to the site, where they were examined. In general, data collected during examination of timbers removed from the construction trench confirmed impressions gained during hand excavation about the size, nature, and configuration of the Morgan City boat.

## CHAPTER VII

### DESCRIPTION AND CLASSIFICATION OF THE MORGAN CITY FLOODWALL BOAT

In Chapter VI, the stratigraphic setting of the Morgan City floodwall boat was discussed, and a bracketed date, from ca. 1872-1895, was established for the vessel's deposition at the site of its recovery. As shown in Figure 21, the articulated remains of this vessel were delimited in situ by two substantial cypress timbers that ran perpendicular to the floodwall. Test excavations revealed that these timbers continued both under the old floodwall and under the shell balk or bank that separated the construction trench from Berwick Bay (Figure 19).

Excavation of Feature 001, together with examination of structural members of the vessel after their removal from the trench, permitted recordation of the construction techniques utilized in the manufacture of the vessel, as well as reconstruction of its hull configuration.

The first timbers encountered during excavation were broken, charred, and disarticulated cypress boards. These loose boards were located immediately below the level of the old floodwall. They rested on a larger loose timber that ran parallel to the floodwall, as well as on a set of articulated and finished planks. There were no structural data that demonstrated conclusively that these uppermost burned and broken boards derived from the vessel in question. Burned sawdust was intermixed with these loose boards.

Removal of the loose boards and sawdust from the excavation unit revealed the ceiling, or deck planking, of the vessel. These cypress ceiling planks were 3/4" (2 cm) thick, and 12" (30 cm) wide, with the exception of the planks immediately adjacent to the large timbers observed on either side of F001 prior to excavation, as shown in Figure 21. These two planks were 10" (25 cm) wide. The ceiling planking ran parallel to the two large timbers; probe and shovel testing adjacent to these two large timbers demonstrated the absence of articulated planking either north or south of the two timbers that delimited feature F001.

These data indicated that the two large timbers that demarcated the feature comprised the chines, or longitudinals, of the vessel. Thus, the ceiling planking was observed to run fore and aft (Figure 24). Drainage holes had been drilled in the ceiling planking, to enable water to flow from the deck into the hull so that the vessel could be pumped. These drainage holes were irregularly spaced and of varying sizes (Figures 24 and 25); thus, they appear to have been a modification to the vessel, rather than having been part of its original design and construction. Circular saw marks were visible on the underside of the ceiling planks, indicating a date of manufacture post 1850 (McKee 1970).

The ceiling planking was attached to floor timbers using large machine cut boat nails (Figure 26). The floor timbers, made of 3" x 8" (8 x 20 cm) cypress, ran perpendicular to both the chines and the ceiling. Eight inches below the base of the ceiling planks, the hull planking was affixed to the floor timbers. The

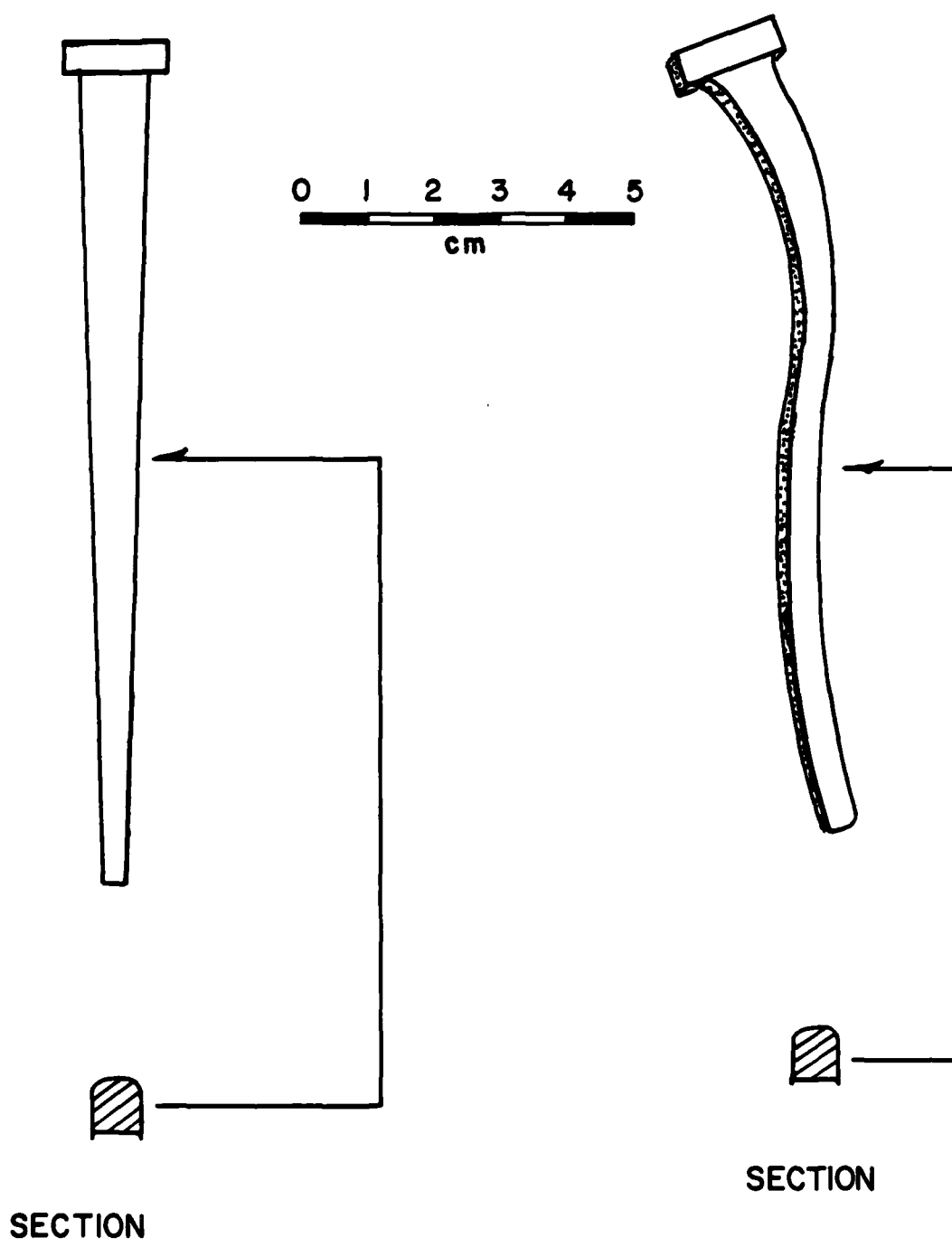


Figure 24. Photograph of the Morgan City floodwall vessel during excavation, showing the ceiling planking running fore and aft, or parallel to the chine, or longitudinal.



Figure 25. Photograph of the Morgan City floodwall vessel showing irregular drainage holes and articulation of floor timbers with the chine.





SECTION

SECTION

Figure 26. Scale drawing of boat nails used to secure ceiling planking to floor timbers.

hull planking was comprised of 1 1/2" (4 cm) thick cypress.

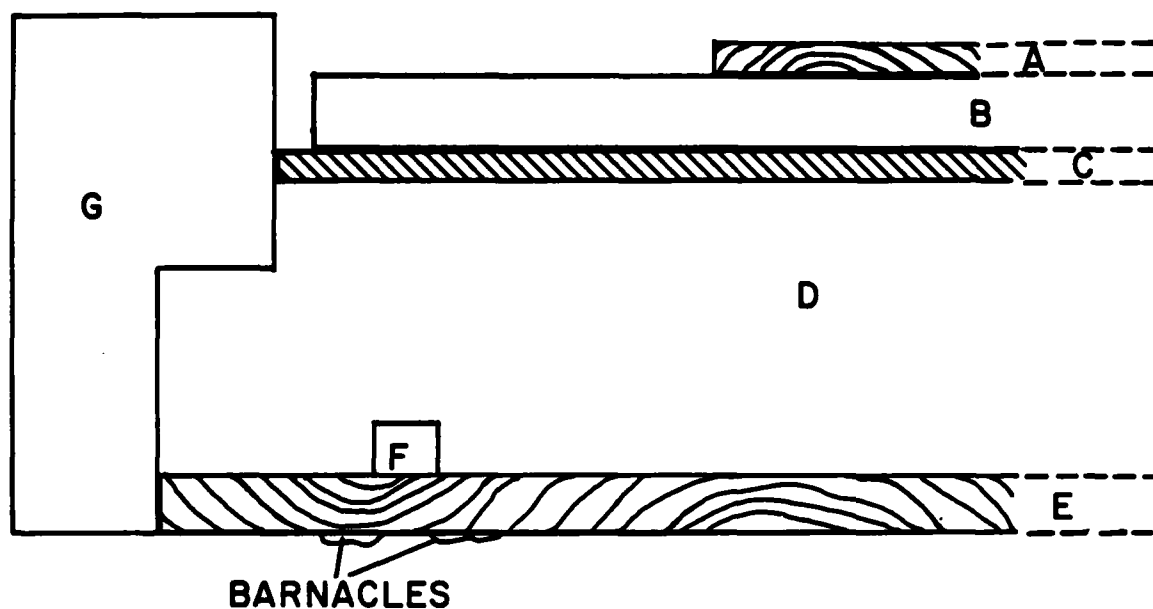
Figure 27 illustrates the joiner techniques utilized in construction of the vessel. The floor timbers and the chines (longitudinals) are shown in Figure 28. Examples of these structural members were examined and measured after their removal from the site. The floor timbers were mortised and tenoned into the two chines at right angles, and placed on 18 1/2" (47 cm) centers (Figures 27, 28, and 29). Nail spacing along the floors averaged 3.5 inches (9 cm). One floor timber examined after its removal from the site exhibited two 2 3/4" x 2 3/4" (7 x 7 cm) limber holes or waterways, cut 7.5" (19 cm) from each end, or 4 inches (10 cm) in from the chine.

The hull planking fit into the rabbet cut bottom of the chines (Figures 27 and 28). The rabbet depth was 1 1/4 inches (3 cm), and it ran the length of the longitudinal chines. The chines, or longitudinals, were constructed of 7 x 14 inch (18 x 36 cm) cypress. Their length is problematical, since they extended below the old floodwall and under the shell balk. When removed from the trench, both ends of the chines were broken off, as shown in Figure 28. No fastenings, pins, drift pins, or bolts were present on the top side of the chines, indicating that the vessel was not built up by adding additional timbers of the same dimensions above and to the chines.

To recapitulate, the longitudinal members, or chines, were 15' 8 1/2" (4.8 m) from exterior to exterior, and 15' 2" (4.62 m) from center to center. Besides being too great a distance for vessel frames, it already has been noted that there was no evidence of additional vessel construction outside of the area demarcated by these chines. Furthermore, none of the structural members examined had any indications of curvature suggestive of the curved chine of a rounded hull, or of angles other than 90 degrees that might indicate a V-bottom vessel. The hull planking also was straight; one piece of hull planking examined after its removal from the trench was straight-sided for its entire length of over twelve feet. It fit into the rabbet cut chines. The 1 1/2 inch (4 cm) hull planking is too diminutive for large ocean going vessels. Similarly, the lack of data indicating how the sides of the vessel could have been built up above the chine timbers suggests a short-sided vessel used exclusively on calm inland waters. Together, these structural data demonstrate clearly that the Morgan City floodwall vessel was a small, flat-bottomed barge.

Using the known beam (breadth, or width) of the vessel, at 15' 8 1/2 inches (4.8 m), and a 3:1 length/beam ratio for small barges (Watts and Reedy 1982; Murphy and Saltus 1982:182), the length of this barge is estimated to have been 47 feet (14.3 m). Using the known beam (15.7 ft.) and depth (1.2 ft.) measurements; the estimated length (47 ft.); and an estimated weight of 62.4 lbs./cubic foot of brackish water, the maximum gross tonnage of this barge would have been 27.6 tons. Even if the barge weighed twenty-five percent of its gross tonnage, it would have been able to carry twenty tons of goods or cargo.

The hypothetical hull configuration of the Morgan City floodwall barge is shown in Figure 30. Since the width of the single floor timber exposed under the floodwall was six inches (16 cm) wide, while the other exposed floor timbers were 8 inches (20



## KEY

- A - LOOSE BOARDS
- B - LOOSE TIMBER
- C - CEILING PLANKING
- D - FLOOR TIMBER
- E - HULL PLANKING (FLOOR)
- F - LIMBER HOLE (WATERWAY)
- G - CHINE (LONGITUDINAL OR SIDE GIRDER)

FIGURE 27. DETAIL OF JOINER TECHNIQUE.

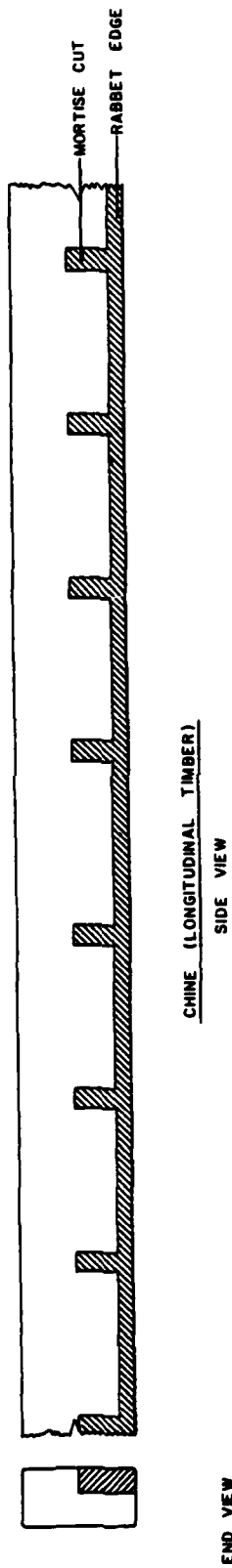
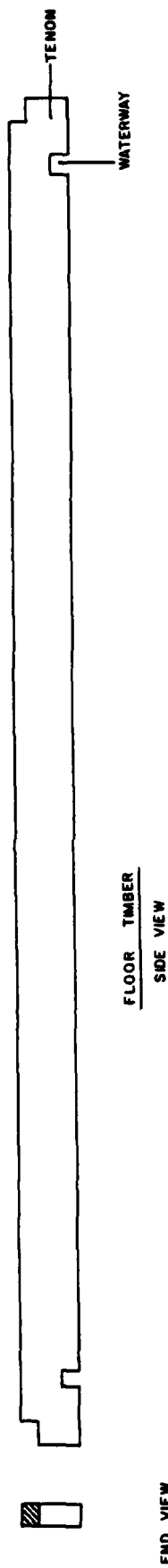


FIGURE 28. DIAGRAM OF FLOOR TIMBERS (top) AND CHINES (bottom) OF THE MORGAN CITY FLOODWALL BOAT.



Figure 29. Photograph of vessel hull during excavation, showing floor timbers mortised and tenoned into chine.

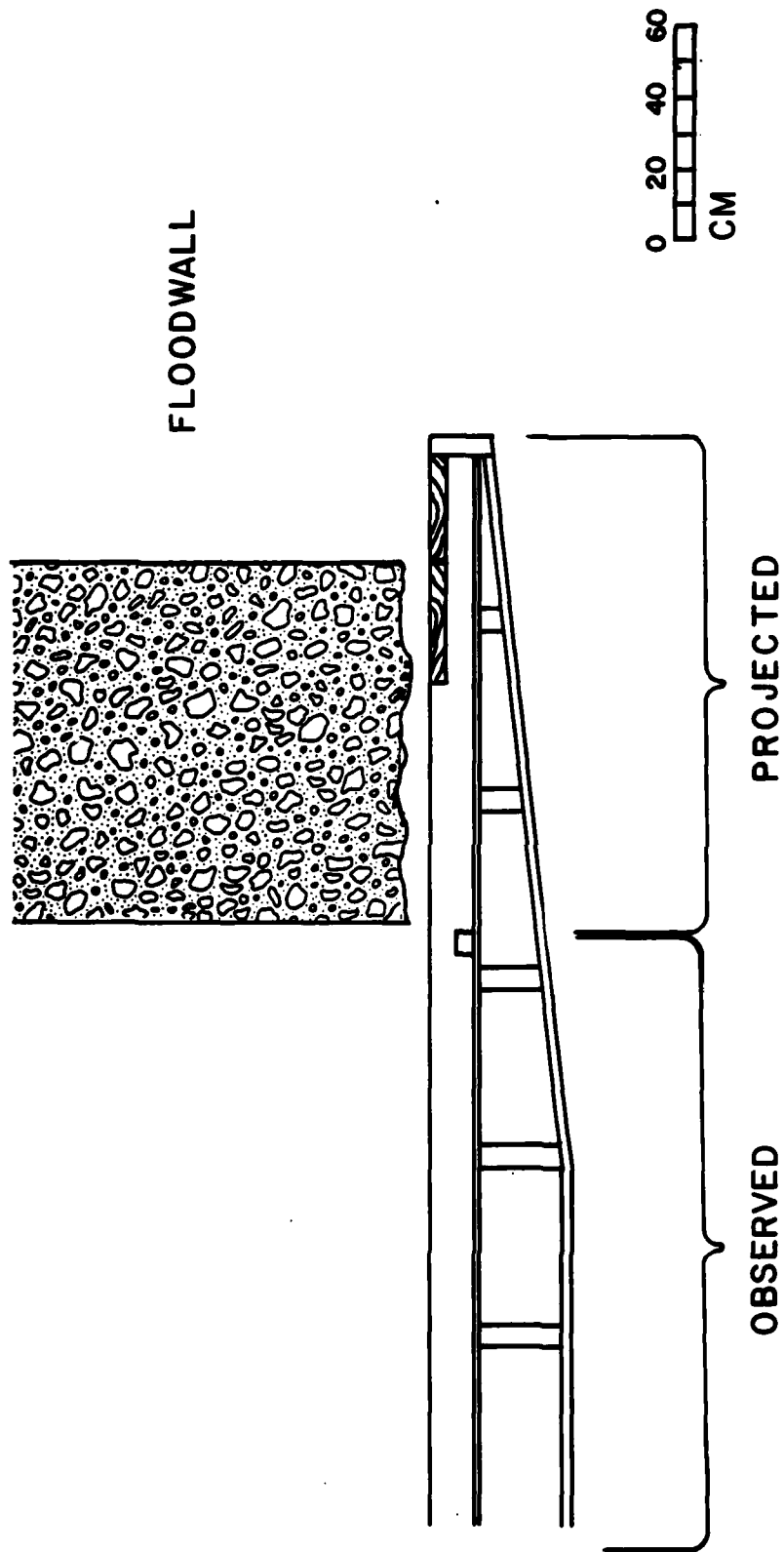


FIGURE 30. HYPOTHETICAL HULL CONFIGURATION.

cm) wide, a gentle rake was indicated, especially since the ceiling planking (Figure 27) was observed to be a level plane. The hull configuration shown in Figure 30, then, is the result of the projection of the rake of the top of the hull planking to its intersection with the bottom of the ceiling. A single 2 x 4 inch member has been added in this reconstruction, to tie the hull and ceiling planking to the chine, forming one end of the vessel.

The vessel found at the Morgan City floodwall site, then, may be classified as a small, flat-bottomed, straight-sided, box-like, very shallow draught barge designed only for use on protected inland waters. Because of its cypress construction, it can be assumed that it was built locally. Its construction was uniform, simple and no doubt inexpensive. Drainage holes, drilled in a disorganized manner, were added to the ceiling sometime after the barge was built. No evidence of means of propulsion was found. It may have been towed, rowed, or propelled using sweeps. As noted previously, the vessel was deposited at the site of its recovery sometime between 1872 and 1895.

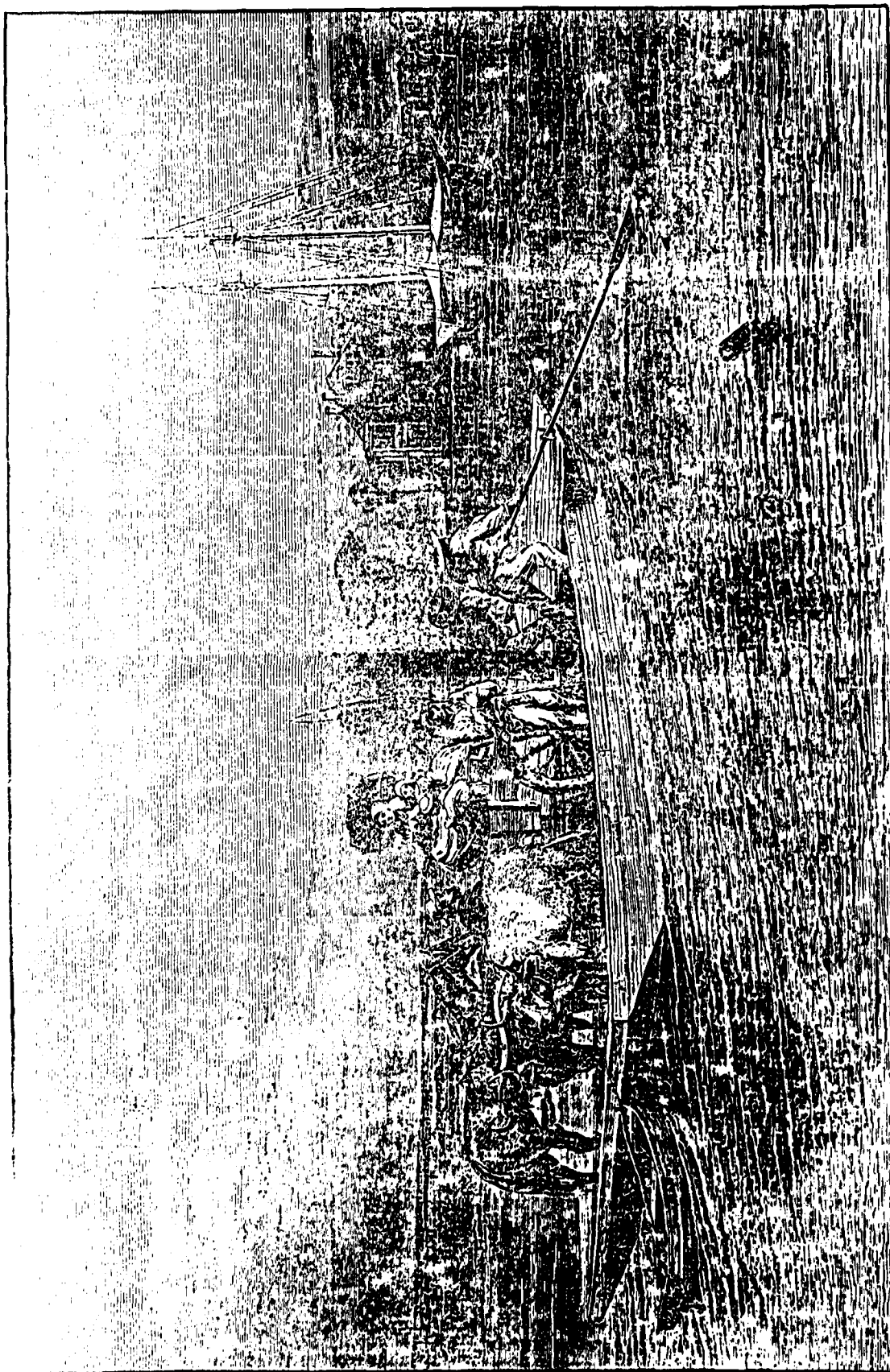


Figure Artist A. R. Waud's rendering of the Brashear  
(Morgan) City ferry boat in 1866.



## CHAPTER VIII

### AN INTERPRETIVE SUMMARY OF THE MORGAN CITY FLOODWALL BARGE

In addition to the size and shape of the Morgan City floodwall barge, several other factors provide clues to the function of the vessel. The first of these was a lack of artifacts directly associated with the vessel. In other words, there was no evidence of cargo except for the sawdust that was present above and below the barge, as well as between the ceiling and hull planking. No coal was found in the bilge or on deck, eliminating viable interpretation of its use as a coal barge. No domestic refuse was associated with the wreck, so it does not appear to have been a houseboat. It was not big enough to have carried cypress from the sawmills for transshipment to Navy shipyards aboard the three-masted schooners that plied that trade. It does not appear to have carried shell or bricks, since there was no major wear atop the ceiling planking. Its shallow sides also precluded to use as a fishing or oyster lugger.

Given the configuration of the barge and knowledge of its historic setting, two viable hypotheses can be developed to explain the function of the barge and its location in front of Square 34 along the waterfront of Morgan City. The first hypothesis is that the vessel functioned as a ferry. As noted previously, a ferry landing was present at the foot of Freret Street on Berwick Bay throughout much of Morgan City's history. That ferry landing may be seen on the 1895 Sanborn map (Figure 9). An 1866 sketch by A. R. Waud (Figure 31) portrays the operation of a ferry-boat to Brashear City on Berwick Bay, presumably in the immediate vicinity of the project area. That ferry is very similar in design to the barge recovered at the floodwall site, albeit the sides of the archeological specimen appear to have been somewhat lower to the water than Waud's artistic rendering.

In fact, barge ferries of the sort depicted in Waud's sketch had a widespread distribution and a long history of use. Figure 32 depicts two such vessels recovered by Gordon Watts from the vicinity of an historic ferry crossing on the northeast Cape Fear River in New Hanover County, North Carolina (Watts and Reedy 1982). These ferries were about thirty-five feet long and eleven feet wide, a length/beam ratio of about 3:1. The rake on Watt's "west vessel" was gentle, and closer to the hypothetical hull configuration of the Morgan City barge. The sides of the "west vessel" were 24 inches; as noted earlier, the Morgan City barge appears to have had sides of about 14 inches.

Two similar flat-bottomed barges are known archeologically for south Louisiana, as well. One of these is curated at the Louisiana State University's Rural Life Museum. As shown in Figure 33, the L.S.U. example is both shorter and narrower than the Morgan City barge, although its configuration is similar. A second south Louisiana example was found by Robert Rushing in 1981 in a sand bar on the Amite River (A. Saltus personal communication 1984). The sides of the Rushing Craft were fourteen inches high,

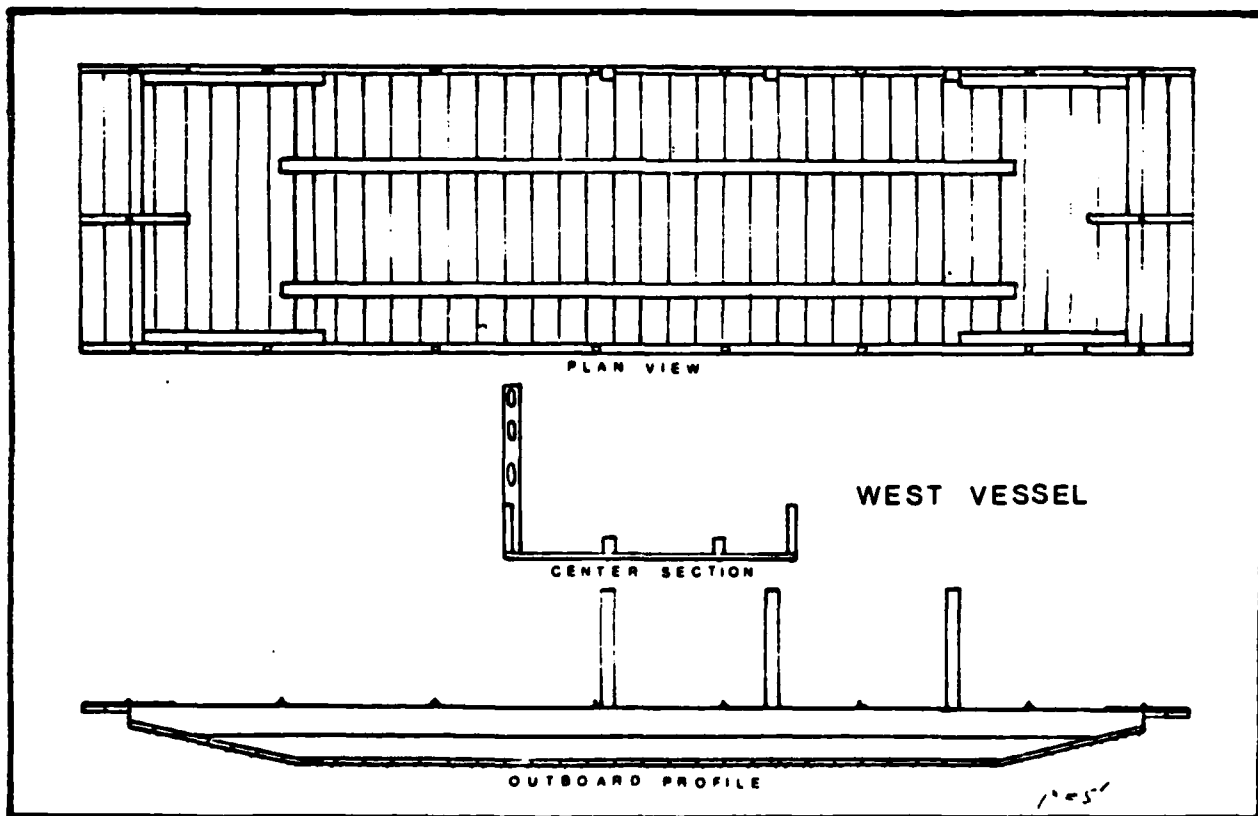
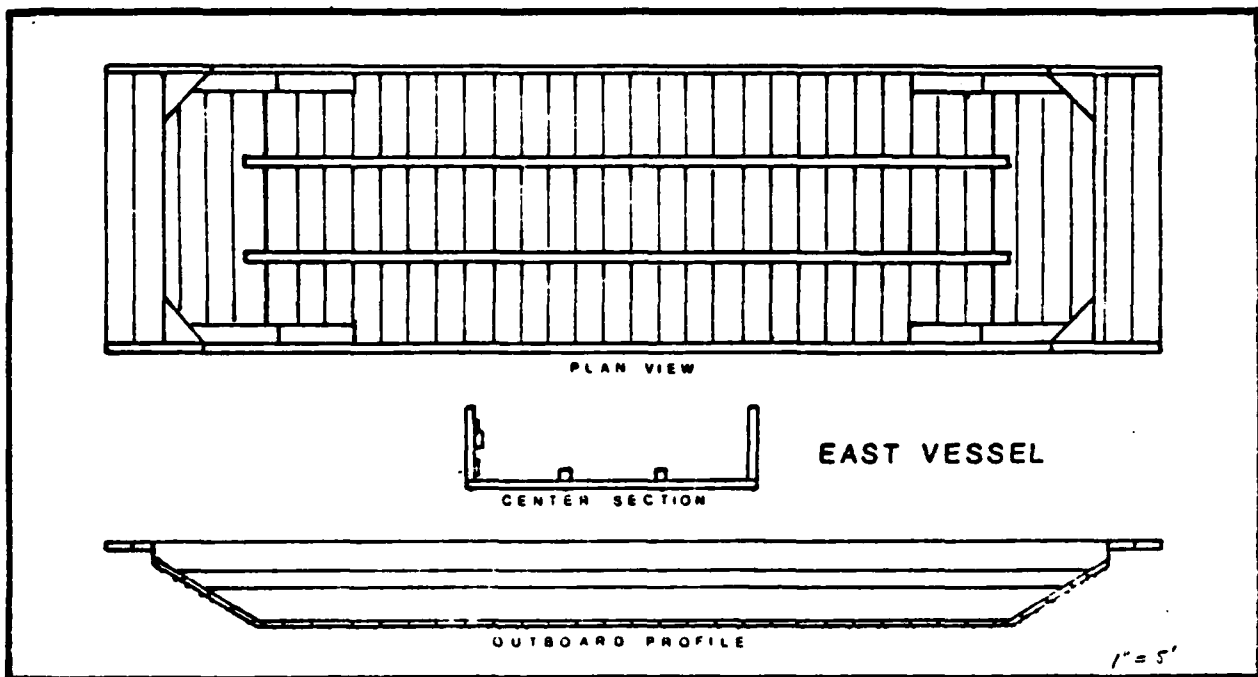


Figure 32. Two ferry barges from the Northeast Cape Fear River, North Carolina/Watts and Reedy 1982).

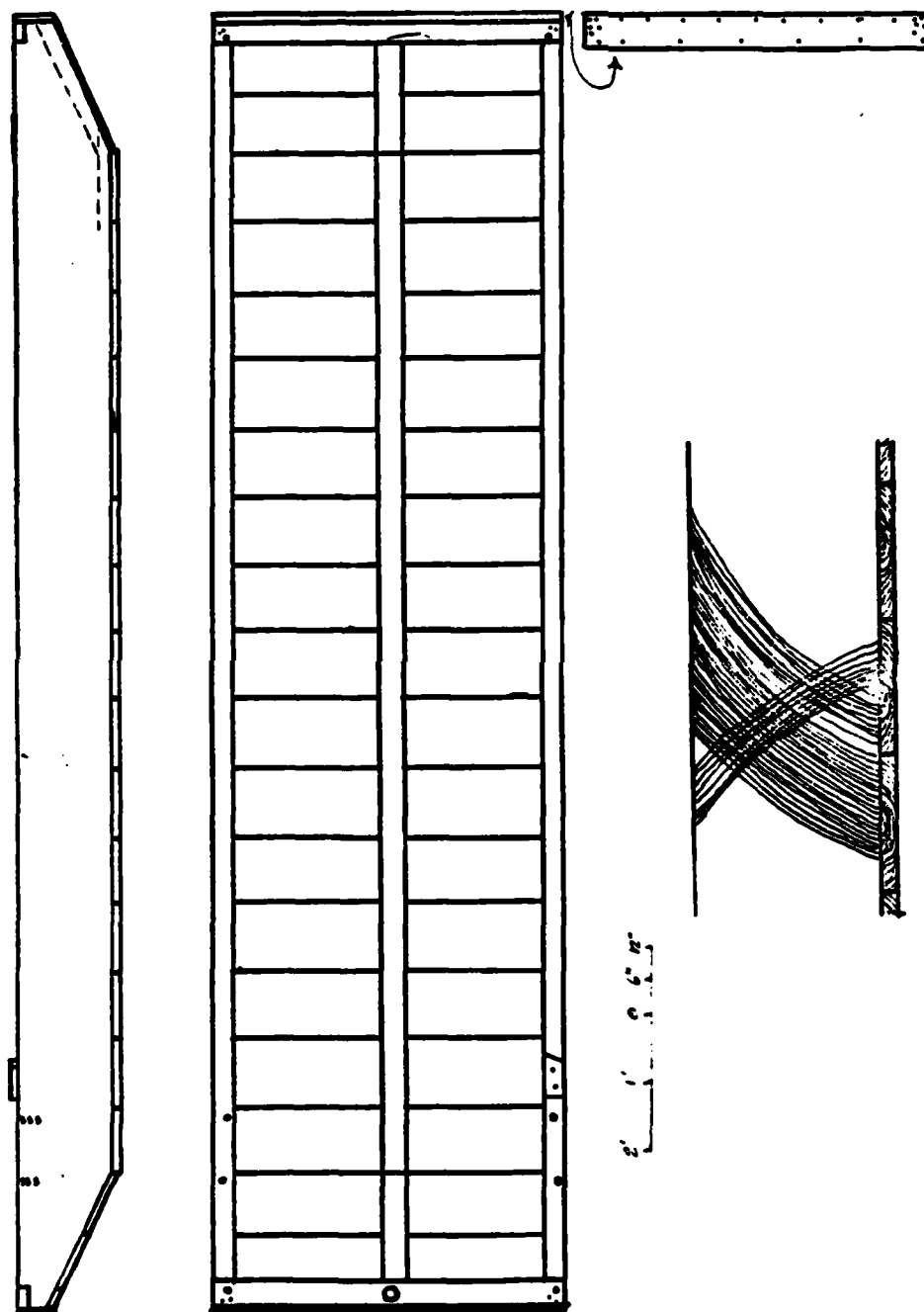


Figure 33. Flat-bottomed craft at the L.S.U. Rural Life Museum (drawing courtesy of Al Saltus, Jr.).

approximating those of the Morgan City barge (Figure 34). Again, the Morgan City barge was substantially larger.

Another similar ferry is illustrated in M.V. Brewington's (1953:60) pictorial maritime history of the Chesapeake Bay (Figure 35). According to Brewington,

From 1638 onward nearly to the present no form of water transport... did as much for as many persons as the obiguitous river ferry. By 1758, Virginia had 138 operating with official sanction and Maryland as many more... Many are still operating: in Wiconico County, Maryland, there (still) are four working in the 18th century manner, a flat boat about forty-five feet long... (M.V. Brewington 1953:57).

The length of the southern Maryland ferries approximates that of the Morgan City specimen.

Figure 36 illustrates two cypress timbers that were removed from the construction trench at the Morgan City floodwall site by the dredge bucket. Neither of these timbers were observed in situ, so their orientation or articulation with the Morgan City barge is problematical. It is possible, however, that these timbers formed an apron for loading or off loading the barge. If the configuration of these timbers approximated that shown in the artist's reconstruction (Figure 37), it would enhance the likelihood that the Morgan City barge functioned as a ferry.

An alternative hypothesis for the function of the Morgan City barge can be drawn directly from the historic record of land use in the area, as well as from the stratigraphic record. As discussed earlier, sawdust was present throughout the stratigraphic cross section of the floodwall site containing the barge. It is possible that this sawdust floated down river from the Brownell-Drews sawmill, and infiltrated the wreck site. However, it also is possible that the use of the Morgan City barge involved sawdust.

Specifically, the first wharf privileges granted in the project area, in 1872, were to William Jones for the purpose of building an ice house at the foot of Greenwood Street. The project area subsequently was used for oyster processing and packing, as shown on the 1885 and 1895 Sanborn maps (Figures 7 and 9). In particular, John Dalton's oyster company, which operated in the vicinity from 1882 until ca. 1912, operated a large fleet of oyster luggers and buy boats, each of which required ice for cooling the oysters. Large quantities of ice also were required for packing the millions of shucked oysters that were sent by boat and rail out of Morgan City during the period in question. Until the advent of refrigerator units, sawdust was the standard insulation for ice. Therefore, it is likely that sawdust was brought in from the sawmills for the purpose of insulation, both at William Jones' icehouse and at Dalton's oyster factories. It is possible, then, that the Morgan City barge was an ice barge. The hastily drilled drainage holes in the ceiling planking, along with the presence of sawdust in the vessel's bilge, would seem to support this

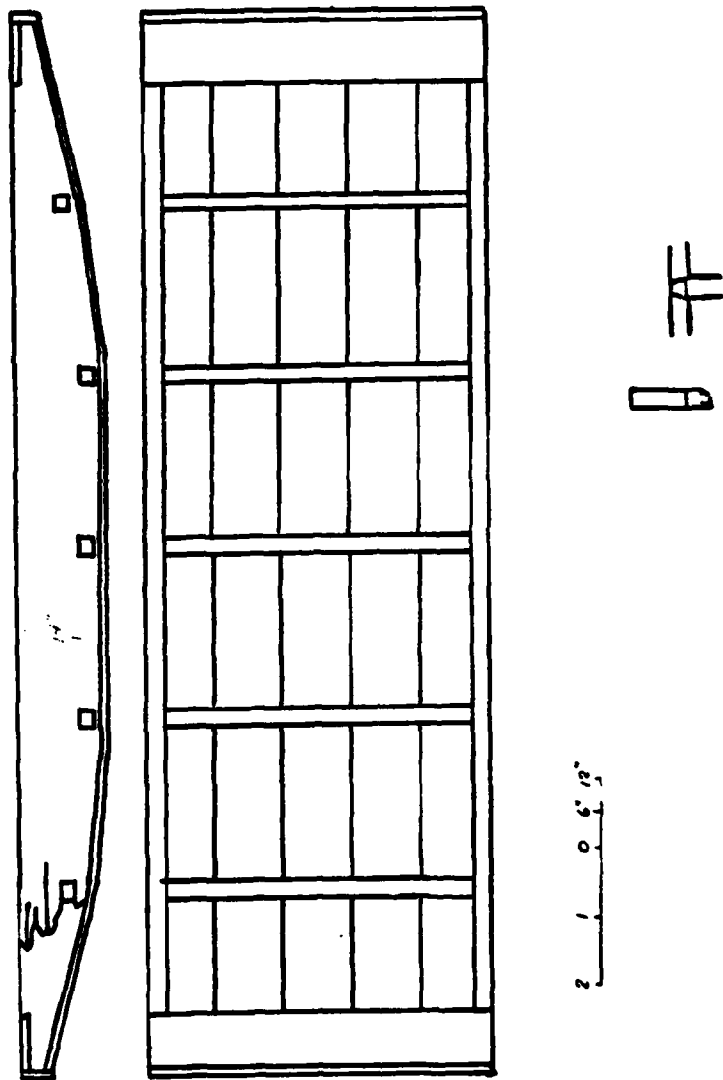


Figure 34. The Rushing Craft (drawing courtesy of Al Saltus, Jr.).

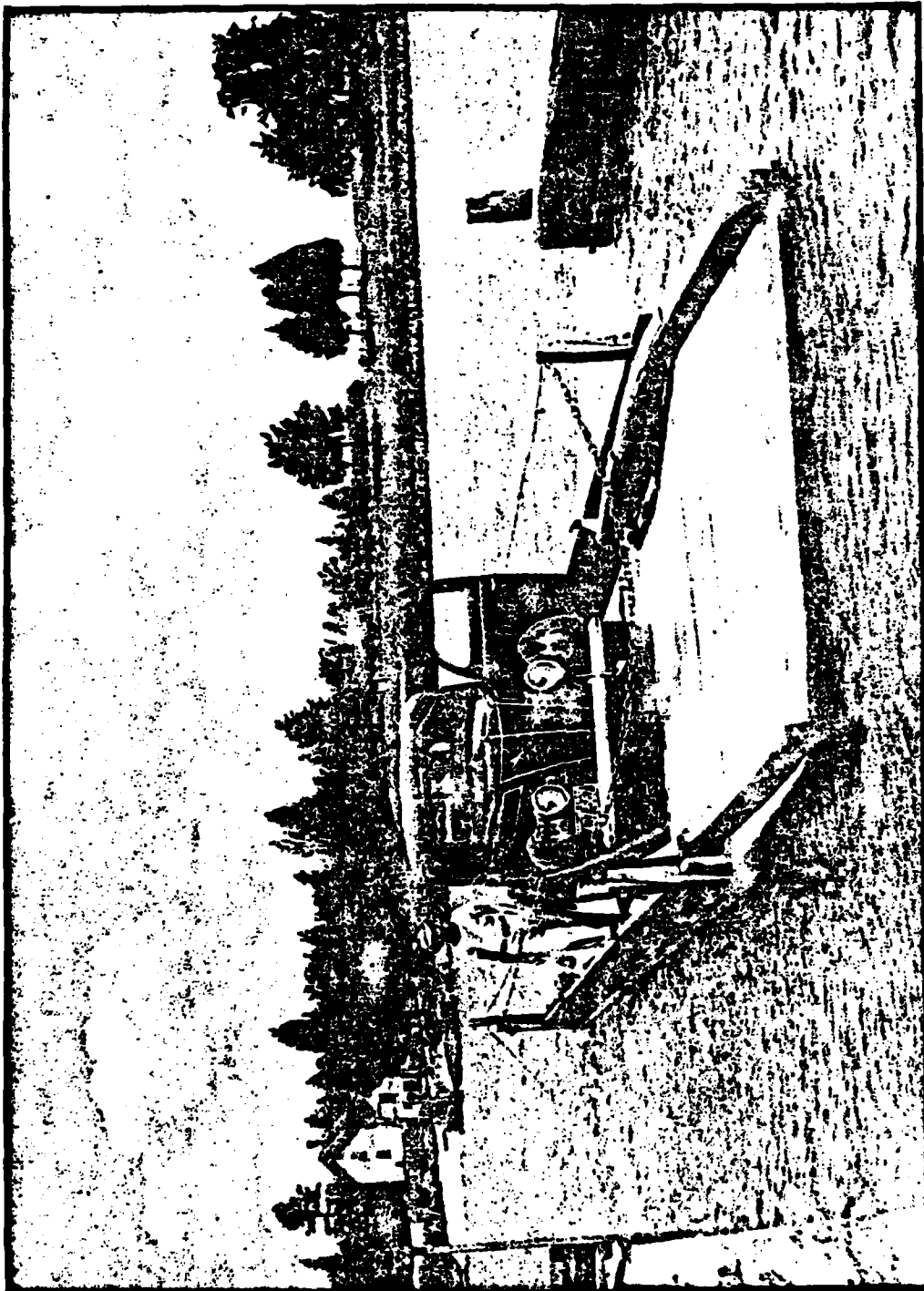
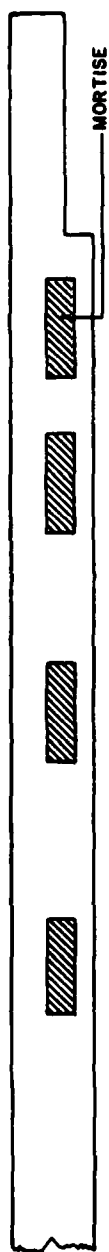
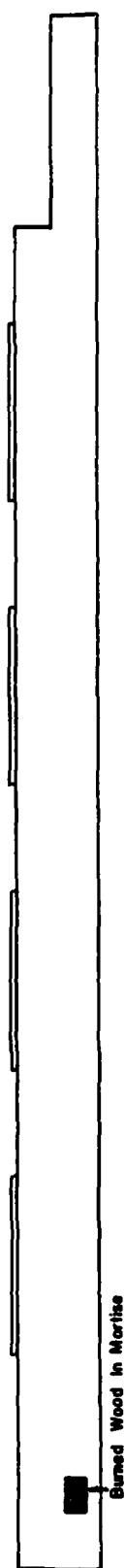


Figure 35. Rope ferry across the Wiconico River, Salisbury, Maryland, ca. 1940 (M.V. Brewington 1953:60).



END VIEW



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SIDE VIEW

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Figure 36. Two cypress timbers recovered from dredge spoil at the Morgan City floodwall site.

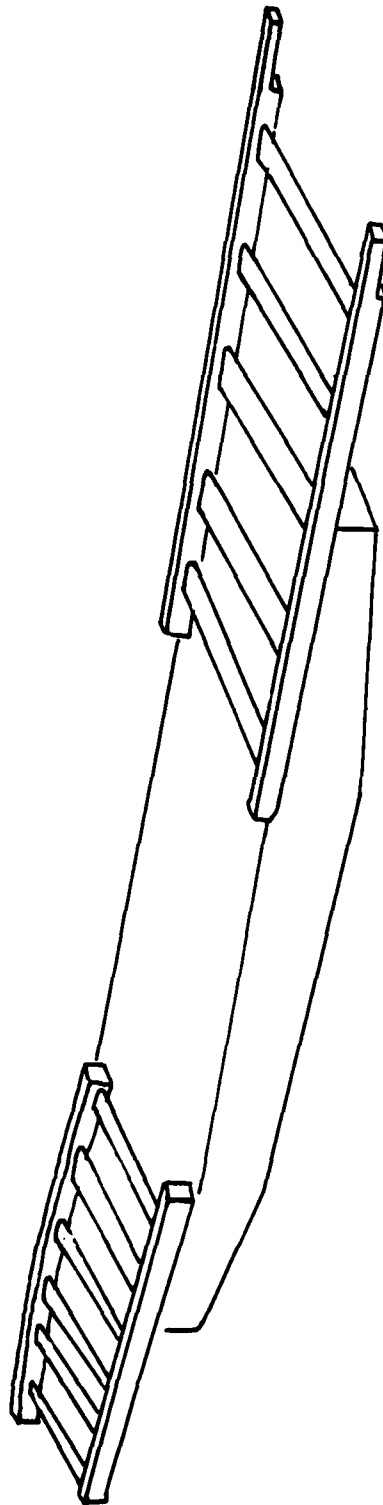
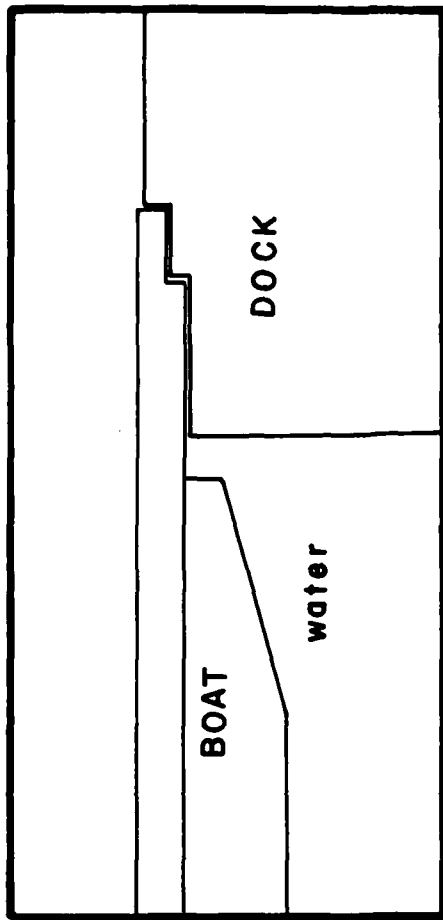


Figure 37. Hypothetical reconstruction of aprons on the Morgan City barge.



hypothesis. At any rate, John Dalton had a need for large amounts of sawdust; and, the wreck site is located directly under the location of his former wharf.

In reality, neither of the foregoing hypotheses are mutually exclusive, since the barge no doubt had a history of use long enough to represent both functions. Although the data do not support definitive rejection of either hypothesis, they do demonstrate the relationship of the barge to a range of site-specific activities that are well-documented historically.

A final note is required about the setting of the floodwall barge, in general. Examination of the entire construction trench area revealed wharf pilings, parts of collapsed wharves, wood debris intentionally dumped, and the range of jetsam normally associated with a high activity waterfront. Historical records indicate that following high water and flooding in 1874 and 1876, literally hundreds of cords of wood were dumped along the bay front in an attempt to stabilize the bankline. It is possible, as well, that old barges were scuttled as part of this effort, especially insofar as the high water emergency of 1874 was sufficient to warrant a national appeal for aid (St. Clair 1908).

The Morgan City barge is now destroyed. With the exception of the area exposed during excavations in August, 1984, the sequence of that destruction was a long and multi-faceted one. There is little chance that any significant portion of the barge remains under the floodwall, and the river side of the shell balk has been dredged a number of times (see Appendix 3, Godfrey Kiff interview). Therefore, no further work is recommended.

Nevertheless, a record of the morphology and settings of the Morgan City barge has been preserved, and despite the difficult setting of the excavations, that record is fairly complete. It is important to note that this record resulted from the recognition of a cultural resource in the construction trench during actual installation of the new floodwall. The U. S. Army Corps of Engineers, New Orleans District, stopped work on that important project until the resource in question could be examined, assessed, and recorded. In addition to compliance requirements, then, the New Orleans District is commended for its concern for the protection of historic archeological remains.

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## APPENDIX 1

### SELECTED TRANSCRIPTS OF TOWN COUNCIL PROCEEDINGS PERTAINING TO DEVELOPMENT OF THE MORGAN CITY WATERFRONT\*

1861, p. 22: A petition from the New Orleans, Opelousas & Great Western Railroad, requesting on behalf of said company the privilege of extending their wharf, (reported) in favor of granting the privilege on the following conditions: viz:

1st. That the wharf shall extend two hundred feet beyond the present upper line with the privilege of continuing the same one hundred feet further, provided that a convenient and proper ferry landing be reserved on said further extension, to be exclusively the property of the Town.

2nd. That said extension or extensions shall be not over two feet above the present Bank of the Bay and shall connect with said Bank throughout its or their entire length with a gradual slope.

3rd. That the Town shall have the privilege of levying and collecting wharfage fees from all water craft not running in connection with the Railroad that may land at said wharf.

4th. That said privilege shall extend for and during the term of ten years from this date.

1861, p. 31: A petition was received from (Olives Gonla), asking the privilege of building a wharf on the Bank of the Bay above the ice house and of occupying the bank as a wood yard, on such terms as the Mayor and Councilmen may deem just.

1873, pp. 51-52: The following petition of William Jones was read and on motion the same was accepted.

To the Hon. Mayor and Councilmen of the Town of Brashear:  
The petition of Wm. Jones with much respect represents that the Mayor and Council passed an ordinance on the 29th day of August, 1872 granting petitioner certain privileges on the front of lots in square No. 25 and at the upper end of Morgan's La. & TRR wharf at the foot of Everett Street, to build a wharf and ice house.

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\* Original document in Morgan City Archives, Morgan City, Louisiana.

And petitioner further represents that he is informed that your honorable body require the said space designated in the aforesaid ordinance which your petitioner is willing to surrender upon the following conditions to wit: The passage by your honorable body and the approval thereof by the Mayor of an ordinance giving petitioner wharf and other privileges for the term of twenty five years on the conditions contained in the annexed ordinance marked (A) for reference to that portion of the river front lying and being between the foot of Greenwood Street, South Side, up to the centre of lot number thirteen in square number thirty nine, making one hundred and fifty feet from south side of Greenwood street.

The following ordinance was read and on motion the rules were suspended and the ordinance passed through its first second and third reading.

An ordinance granting wharf and other privileges to William Jones his heirs or assigns for the space of twenty five years.

Sec. 1: Be it ordained by the Mayor and Councilmen of the Town of Brashear, that William Jones, his heirs or assigns be and they are hereby authorized to erect a wharf and ice house thereon, commencing at the foot of Greenwood Street in the Town of Brashear on the south side of said street on the Berwicks Bay, and running up the said Berwicks Bay to the centre of lot number thirteen in square number thirty nine, now owned by William Drews, and to use and control the same for the term of twenty five years from and after the passage of this ordinance.

1877, p. 233: The following ordinance was offered, read, and, on nomination, duly seconded, the rules were suspended and said ordinance passed through its several readings and finally adopted:

An Ordinance to invite and facilitate its deliveries of freight to, and from the Atchafalaya River and its tributaries to Morgan City, and to grant Charles Morgan's La. & Texas R.R. on Front Street between Everett and Freret Streets.

Sec. 1: Be it ordained by the Mayor and Councilmen of Morgan City, that to facilitate the discharge of cargo going to and from New Orleans, through this City and port, that Charles Morgan's La. & Texas R.R. is hereby granted the privilege, and is authorized to lay a single rail-road track, from the south side of Everett Street along the margin of the bay-front, on Front Street till it reaches the upper limits of Freret Street.

Sec. 2: Be it further ordained, that the said right of rail-way is granted on condition that the aforesaid track of rail-road shall be so graded as to correspond with the height of the present town wharf on Front Street, at the foot or over which it is to pass and that the grantee shall fill up the streets to the bank head where his rail-way passes.

Sec. 3: Be it further ordained, that this front and privilege take effect from and after its passage, and is to remain in full force for the term of eighteen years, from the date hereof, and all ordinances or parts of ordinances in conflict herewith be and the same are hereby repealed.

1878, p. 284: An ordinance granting wharf privileges and the right to lay one or more rail-road tracks from the rail-road foreman's house on Rail-Road Avenue to the upper limits of Freret Street, in this City to Morgan's Louisiana and Texas Rail-Road and Steam Ship Company.

Whereas: Captain John N. Pharr in a communication to this Body, dated April 26th 1878 has signified his willingness to transfer to Morgan's La. & Texas Rail-Road and Steam Ship Company all the wharf privileges heretofore granted him by the Mayor and Council of Morgan City La. on May 10th 1875, and

Whereas: For the further facility of the Rail-Road, and for the further benefit of Morgan City, it is necessary to enlarge the capacity of receiving and forwarding through freights; the thirty (30) feet now owned by this City, between the present wharf of John N. Pharr, and the grant for privileges made to M. Kahn is necessary for the purposes of M.L. & T.R.R. & S.S. Co. therefore,

Sec. 1: Be it ordained by the Mayor and Council of Morgan City in Special Session Convened: That the transfer of wharf privileges granted by the Mayor and Council of Morgan City to John N. Pharr be and the same is hereby acknowledged and confirmed, and shall hereafter be known for the unexpired portion of said grant, as the privilege hereby made and granted to Morgan's Louisiana & Texas Rail-Road and Steam Ship Company.

Sec. 2: Be it further ordained etc: that the thirty feet (30) between the terminus of Pharr's present wharf and the grant made to Mathias Kahn, the said thirty (30) feet being now owned by this City, be and hereby granted to Morgan's La. Texas Rail-Road and Steam Ship Company, for the same space and term as the grant mentioned in the first section of this Ordinance known as the Pharr grant.

## APPENDIX 2

### SELECTED TRANSCRIPTS OF THE MORGAN CITY RECORD OF ORDINANCES PERTAINING TO DEVELOPMENT OF THE WATERFRONT

1873, p. 51: An ordinance granting wharf and other privileges to Wm. Jones his heirs or assigns for the space of twenty five years.

Sec. 1: Be it ordained by the Mayor and Councilmen of the Town of Brashear that Wm. Jones his heirs or assigns be, and they are hereby authorized to erect a wharf and ice house thereon, commencing at the foot of Greenwood Street in the Town of Brashear on the south side of said street on the Berwicks Bay, running up the said Berwicks Bay to the centre of lot number thirteen in square number thirty nine, now owned by William Drews and to use and control the same for the term of twenty five years from and after the passage of this ordinance.

1874, p. 65, Sec. 1: ...no oyster shells shall be thrown in the Bay (Berwick Bay) within one hundred feet of any wharf or the bank and that all oystermen be and they are hereby required to leave the shells from oysters removed from their boats to the wharf or bank, and any violation of this ordinance shall subject the offender to a fine not less than one nor more than fifty dollars.

1874, pp. 67-68: An ordinance authorizing the Mayor and Committee on Streets and Landings to grant persons wharf privileges for a number of years.

Sec. 1: Be it ordained by the Mayor and Councilmen of the Town of Brashear that the Mayor and Committee on Streets and Landings be and they are hereby authorized to grant all persons who may apply to them, the privilege of building wharves on the river front, above the wharf front occupied by M. Kahn and of using the same for a term of not more than ten years from the time of the contract under the following conditions to wit: The persons obligating themselves to build a good and substantial wharf under the supervision of the Mayor and Committee on Streets and Landings. The same to (return) to the use of and belong to the Town at the expiration of ten years and to be turned over at that time, by the builders in a good and substantial condition, free from cost to the Town, the builder to collect such wharfage fees, as the Mayor and Councilmen shall from time to time fix during the ten years. No wharf to be constructed unless it is on pins or posts of hewn timber, and from an abutment extending (unspecified) feet but which butment shall be built up of clean earth, the side and ends shall be of hewn timber. No buildings

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\* Original document in Morgan City Archives, Morgan City, Louisiana.



shall be erected on wharves and the same shall be under the Police control of the Town authorities and said wharf shall be kept in repairing by the builder.

1875, p. 71: An ordinance granting wharf privileges to John N. Pharr on Front Street.

Sec. 1: Be it ordained by the Mayor and Councilmen of the Town of Brashear, that permission is hereby granted John N. Pharr, to build a wharf on Front Street, commencing at the upper end of Morgan's Louisiana and Texas Rail Road and running up Berwick's Bay, one hundred and thirty feet, said wharf to be erected by the said Pharr under the supervision of the Committee on Streets and Landings, and to belong to the said Pharr for the period of twenty years to be used by him for the landing, discharging, and loading of steam boats running in connection with Morgan's Louisiana and Texas Rail Road from Bayous Teche and Vermillion. At the expiration of twenty years from the passage of this ordinance the said Pharr shall turn over said wharf to the Mayor and Councilmen free of charge in good and substantial condition and during the said term of twenty years, the said Pharr shall not transfer the right and privileges granted under this ordinance without the written consent of the Mayor and Councilmen.

Sec. 2: Be it further ordained, etc, that in consideration of the grant made in the first section of this ordinance the said Pharr is hereby required to build for the use of the Mayor and Councilmen, four feet of wharf above and adjoining the wharf provided for in the preceding section, and six feet between the two small wharves for the landing of and safe moving of oyster boats, and other small crafts, the same to be done under the supervision of the Committee on Streets and Landings.

1875, p. 73: An ordinance leasing certain wharf privilege to Chester B. Darrall, his heirs and assigns.

Sec. 1: Be it ordained by the Mayor and Councilmen of the Town of Brashear, that the Committee on Streets and Landings, together with the Mayor be, and are hereby authorized and empowered to lease to Chester B. Darrell of this Parish, for such consideration as to them may seem meet and for a term of not exceeding twenty years the use of the bank of Berwick's Bay commencing at the upper side of Freret Street and running up said Bay one hundred and fifty feet including the front of lots number "12" "13" and "14" in square No. 34 for the purpose of erecting a wharf over the margin of said Bay.

1877, pp. 93-94: An ordinance fixing and regulating the charges of wharfage, levee and other facilities afforded by Morgan City to Commerce.

Sec. 10: Be it ordained by the Mayor and Councilmen of Morgan City that as a reasonable remuneration for the facilities

furnished by the City to Commerce, such as building and keeping in order, the wharves, piers and levees and other port expenses, all steamers, vessels, crafts etc availing themselves of such facilities, shall be subjected to the charges herein after named; taking tonnage, size, and capacity as the most equitable and the best and the most practicable means of determining the amount which should be respectively be paid by each vessel or craft.

Firstly: The charges upon all vessels and steamers arriving and landing at the wharves from 1500 to 500 tons shall be \$5.00 for the privilege of landing and remaining 2 hours; remaining more than 2 hours, one dollar additional per day. All vessels or water crafts from 500 to 100 tons \$2.50 for landing, with privilege of remaining 2 hours and 50 cents per day for every day thereafter.

Secondly: The wharfage dues on all water crafts not over 100 tons (barges and flat boats excepted) shall be 25 cents for landing with the privilege of remaining moored for 2 hours and 10 cents for every day after the first 2 hours.

Thirdly: The wharfage dues on all crafts enumerated in the foregoing section, and barges and flat boats, when they land with building material, wood, bricks and shells, shall be exempt from wharfage dues, but shall pay 10 cents a cord for wood, 10 cents per (m) feet for lumber, 20 cents per (lb.) for bricks and 1 cent per barrel for shells, for passing over said wharves, should the above-named materials remain upon the wharves more than 24 hours, there shall be an additional charge of five cents per cord for wood, five cents per (m) for lumber and bricks and 1/2 cent per (barrel) for shells, for each day thereafter.

1880, p. 115-116: An ordinance relative to Morgan City Bay Front.

Preamble: Where as it is a matter of urgent necessity that the encroachments of the Bay upon Front Street be prevented and whereas the City is not able at present to do the necessary work and whereas the agents of Morgan's La. & Texas Rail Road have made application for certain grants and privileges upon said Front Street, now therefore, for the benefit of the City by protecting its Bay Front and to facilitate commerce, be it ordained as follows viz.

Sec. 1: Be it ordained by the Mayor and Councilmen of Morgan City in regular sessions convened, that the Morgan La. & Texas Rail Road and S.S. Company be and they are hereby granted the privilege enumerated in this ordinance, upon the terms and conditions as hereinafter set forth.

Sec. 2: The right and privilege to extend, construct, maintain use and operate a rail-road track for the term of ten years, from and after this date, beginning at the north side of Freret Street and extending up Front street to the north side of

Brashear Avenue, being a distance of nine hundred feet.

Sec. 3: The said rail road track shall be laid upon the same level and grade as the said Front Street and so filled with earth that there shall be no obstruction to the passage of carts wagons and vehicles over and across said track.

Sec. 4: The provisions, conditions and considerations of this grant are, that the said track shall not be placed any nearer the line of the sidewalk than twenty feet and the said Rail Road and S.S. Co. obligate themselves to promptly fill with earth to the level of the street and out to the bank head or break-water, along said line of track, so far as their track extends and to build such bank-head from Loeb's wharf to north side of Brashear Avenue and to fill the same with earth as specified free of expense to the City, should they run their track so far and the cars upon said track shall not be left standing so as to unnecessarily obstruct or prevent persons or vehicles passing to and from the ferry and to and from private and city wharves. And the Rail Road and S.S. Co. shall put down good box drains under their track on both sides of any streets the said track crosses.

1883, p. 135: An ordinance to encourage the oyster business within the limits of the City and to grant all facilities to our citizens who are engaged or may hereafter engage in said business and to authorize the construction on the River Bank of all buildings necessary to carry on such trade.

Sec. 1: Be it ordained by the Mayor and Councilmen of Morgan City in special session convened that hereafter it shall be lawful for any and all citizens of this city who are now engaged or who may hereafter engage in the oyster business to erect and build on the River Front, and at such place where they have the right or permission to build, such sheds, depots and houses as will be of convenience to their work fully develop in our midst this valuable branch of our commerce; provided all the oyster shells are donated to the City.

1883, p. 136, Sec. 1: Be it ordained by the Mayor and Councilmen of Morgan City in regular monthly session convened that (lease) and permission is hereby granted to A. Ermann of this City to Extend his present wharf in front of the "ice house", on the River Bank on Front Street fifty feet on the south side so as to enable the said Ermann the better to carry on his ice business and the unloading of ice vessels coming to this port.

1887, p. 156: An ordinance repealing all ordinances, parts of ordinances, resolutions and parts of resolutions granting wharf privileges and franchises in all cases where the wharves have not been kept in good repair and in good order and where the grantees have failed to comply with the terms and conditions of their grants and forfeiting said grants and making said grants the property of the City.

**APPENDIX 3**

**SELECTED TRANSCRIPTS OF ORAL INTERVIEWS (1984)  
PERTAINING TO THE MORGAN CITY BOAT SITE**

**Morgan City Floodwall Boat, Tape 001, May 23, 1984, Mr. Roland R. Kidd, Morgan City, LA**

Mr. Roland R. Kidd is a local abstracter and resident of Morgan City. This interview was conducted at the Morgan City Archives, Morgan City, Louisiana.

A: As I said in and around the year 1900, exactly when I don't know, but the Brownell Drews Lumber Company was formed and located on Front Street in the neighborhood of St. Clair Street to Terrebonne street, or somewhere up in that neck of the woods. I know for a fact that there was a steamer built in the City of New Orleans during the year 1901, and was delivered here in the beginning of 1902 or latter part of 1901, named the William Drews. It was named after my great grandfather. The steamer was brought to Morgan City, and I think it made, from the family history and family talk and what we know, made two trips upriver, what we call upriver, going up the bayous to tow timber down to the mill.

Q: That was a mill here in Morgan City?

A: Yes. It was located right there where all the oil companies are. That was all mill site. So in 1902 the William Drews, the boat was 40 by 200, that's what really caught our attention, that fact that it was same size. We don't say that that's the boat because I don't know but the measurements were very similar. And in those days I guess it was mostly steamers, I don't know, but I assumed it was, and it burned to the water's edge as far as it could burn and then sank. What part of Front Street, it happened on Front Street, where I can't tell you but we did have a steamer that did burn to the water's edge and like I said, it was built in New Orleans in 1901 and brought to Morgan City and then in 1902, I'm sure it was 1902, latter part of 1902, because it only made a few trips. Since that time there was two other William Drews steamers built, which I have pictures of those.

Q: The boat is roughly in the middle of block 34 on Front Street. At that time they had a shipyard.

A: At that time they had a shipyard here and ship builders, ship carpenters. I remember talk about it. Of course I wasn't born until 1925. I remember that this was here because Goldman's hardware store was - let's see this is Belinger's Drug and then Goldman's hardware had to be somewhere in here. I don't know if it was hardware then but I know daddy said about the shipyard and the machine shop were just south of Goldman's hardware store up on Front Street, maybe in the front of Belinger's, they used to talk about it. But I know that that was there.

Q: So the boat that was bringing this lumber down didn't necessarily have it on the boat, they just used it as like a tow

boat?

A: No. See the boat that I'm talking about, it had a large cargo area, it even had built-in boxes that had big blocks of ice in it, they took ice and stuff up to these people up in the swamp. They had camp boats all along the bayous and most of the people up there would be working for these people in the swamp.

Q: What other types of cargo did the William Drews carry?

A: Groceries and things for the people in the area. Merchandise, mostly for accommodations to the swamper that lived up there.

Q: Was it also a passenger boat?

A: Not hardly. Maybe a few people come to town on it.

Q: What was its general run?

A: I don't know.

Q: Just upriver as you say, then it stopped off in Morgan City?

A: Well it would bring the timber down to the mill and it would go up, for instance...

Q: Would they go farther south after that?

A: South? No. They'd go north. Mostly everything that they owned was north.

Q: Looks like they had drums of cargo down below.

A: Here's another thing. They had to have everything that they would burn in the boilers - had to have room for that for long trips.

Q: Was that coal?

A: They used wood and coal. A lot of ash wood, trees and stuff was burned in the boilers.

Q: So you would expect to find in a cargo hold all kinds of wood chips and coal?

Q: Yea.

**Morgan City Floodwall Boat, Tape 001, May 23, 1984, Mr. Jesse Boudreaux, Morgan City, LA**

Mr. Jesse Boudreaux is a resident of Morgan City. This interview was conducted at the Morgan City Archives, Morgan City, Louisiana.

Q: Tell me about those barges they had along Front Street.

A: Well this is strictly hearsay. The coal barges came on from up north, in other words, they would have floated them down the river. They couldn't bring them back up because of the current. And they would bring them down there and disassemble them and do whatever they had to do with them and they would use a couple of them.

Q: When they had some levee problems they used a couple to shore up the levee and just filled them with dirt and built them into the levee?

A: That's what I had heard. This is strictly hearsay.

**Morgan City Floodwall Boat, Tape 001, May 23, 1984, Mr. Leonce Songe and Mr. Nolton Duplantis, Morgan City, LA**

Mr. Leonce Songe is a 77 year old lifetime resident of Morgan City. He has been in the lumber and building industry for 45 years and has been employed by the city of Morgan City as building inspector for 15 years

Mr. Nolton Duplantis is a 72 year old Morgan City Public Service employee who worked on the construction of the 1946 Morgan City Floodwall. These interviews were conducted at Mr. Songe's office at City Hall in Morgan City.

Q: How old are you, Mr. Songe?

A: 77.

Q: You've been in this city how long?

A: All my life.

Q: You are the building inspector?

A: Yea, I was in house building and lumber yards 45 years. I've been with the city fifteen years.

Q: Do you remember that old boat the Sibilla?

A: Well, not this particular one but I remember several of them like that.

Q: Did you see here, (photograph) here it is under water, pitched over sideways.

A: I remember the '26 (1926) storm very much.

Q: Did the floodwall break at all during the '26 storm?

A: There was no floodwall.

Q: Here's the 1912 flood (photograph).

A: I remember the 1912 flood, too.

Q: What kind of buildings were right there in front of the Dyer building during that time?

A: As far as I know the only building was this old machine shop.

Q: What about Dalton's oysters?

A: Well, that was further down.



Q: How far down?

A: Well right down there where the four lane bridge passes.

Q: So the big oyster house was down towards the bridge?

A: Where the bridge is now at the corner of Greenwood and Front, there were some brick buildings there and the oyster house was right across the street. My daddy worked in it.

Q: Mr. Duplantis, what is your first name?

A: Nolton.

Q: And you worked on that floodwall, that was what, 1948, '49?

A: Before that. The seawall was finished in the early forties. I quit there and went to work for Chicago Bridge & Iron when the war broke out.

Q: That's right because the seawall appears on this 1940 Sanborn's map as an 8 inch concrete seawall. So it must have been built in the late thirties, is that right?

A: That's right, thirty-nine.

Q: That old railroad track that used to run along there. Do you remember that old railroad track? That would have been outside the old forty seawall on the Atchafalaya river side?

A: That track would have been on the back side of the seawall.

Q: On the river side or on the Front Street side?

A: On the river side.

Q: How old are you, Mr. Duplantis?

A: 72.

Q: Do you remember if before they put that floodwall in, when you had a bad flood, if the water would come all the way into town? Would it come all the way up Front street into those stores?

A: My dad had a store on the corner of Ferret and Front, a grocery store. We used to open up in the morning. We had to cut the doors in half so we could open up. We were on stilts four feet high in the store. Good thing we had twelve foot ceilings, otherwise we would have been in trouble.

Q: Besides the water just overflowing the bank, when the water receded, did it leave a lot of damage in the wall (floodwall)?

A: We had to take a shovel to get the mud up.

Q: Did it collapse that little levee at all out there when the river would flood like that?

A: Where was the levee at?

Q: There wasn't really a levee, it was just a bank out there?

A: That's an old wharf.

Q: Did it collapse that old wharf out there?

A: It took everything with it.

Q: Took it all away?

A: Absolutely. Left a few piles standing, that's about it.

Q: How far in towards town did the bay front erode in when it would come in? Would it cut into Front Street at all?

A: The water came up to Third Street, City Park was dry.

Q: I'd like to ask both of you this question. Given the high water that you saw during the years of these floods, and the erosion that you had on the bank down here and the fact that a lot of ships that took a beating, a lot of damage, do you think that there was any way for any of these ships in the 1920s to have been washed down and under the oysters in here so that they may have a more recent boat than an older one, say 1920s. Like, see the Sibilla sliding in here, is there any way that any one of those storms could have washed one of those ships or a hull under there, do you think?

A: I hardly think so.

Q: You never saw anything like that going on. After those floods, did they have to rebuild those banks again or fill it back in with a lot of shells?

A: No. They didn't do anything like that. All they did was clean the mess up.

Q: So more or less the mud just washed over the bank but it didn't tear the bank away?

A: We got the biggest part out with shovels and then we got the City to give us hoses and we hosed it right back out into the river.

Q: Do you remember any fires or any ships burning and sinking out there?

AD-A150 877

THE HISTORICAL ARCHEOLOGY OF THE MORGAN CITY FLOODWALL  
BOAT(U) GOODWIN (R CHRISTOPHER) AND ASSOCIATES INC NEW  
ORLEANS LA R C GOODWIN ET AL. 23 SEP 84 PD-RC-84-09  
DACM29-84-D-0029

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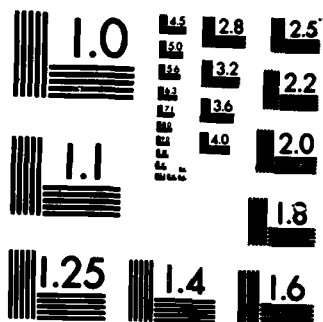
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NATIONAL BUREAU OF STANDARDS-1963-A

A: No.

Q: I just want to be clear on one thing. During these floods and storms that you can remember, Front Street never actually caved in out there or eroded back. So there is no way that that land could have been taken away in a storm and they might have used an old boat to help fill it up?

A: No.

Q: As long as you can remember Front Street was intact?

A: You see they had this track, a spur track for the railroad, used to go all the way up to sawmill. If the land would have washed away the tracks would have went.

Q: So the railroad track never did get washed away either?

A: No.

**Morgan City Floodwall Boat, Tape 002, June 13, 1984, Mrs. Lela King Lehmann and Mrs. Catherine B. Dilsaver, Morgan City, LA**

Mrs. Lela King Lehmann and Mrs. Catherine B. Dilsaver are Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Morgan City Archives Commission. This interview was conducted at Mrs. Lehmann's home in Morgan City.

Q: My earliest Sanborn map is 1885 and it shows a wharf and oyster depot right in front of our block. Now, I've got an 1875 ordinance giving C.B. Darrall wharf privileges there. I was wondering if that was the same wharf and if he did in fact have an oyster business?

A: C. B. Darrall was a Congressman in St. Mary Parish, and he and his brother bought up property along Front Street area.

B: They had property apparently right there in block thirty-four between Freret and Greenwood?

A: At the corner of Freret and Front is what we call the Belinger Building and that Belinger Building was a Darrall Building. I found in the Council meeting minutes where they would ask for wharf privileges opposite their property.

Q: Then he wasn't specifically an oysterman?

A: No, not Darrall.

Q: Do you know if any of the ferries ever sunk?

A: I've never come across that.

Q: In C. H. St. Clair's 1908 historical notes, he discusses an encroachment by Berwick Bay on Front Street coming to within several feet of Mrs. Goldman's store or Mr. Goldman's building on Front Street. I went to the St. Mary's Parish court house records and I do have Mrs. Goldman buying some property, as a matter of fact, from the Darralls right there in Block thirty-four. Was that store the same store that C. H. St. Clair was referring to? Were there other Goldmans with businesses in town?

A: I presume so because St. Clair wrote that in 1908. I've been over that very carefully in writing the Lehmann history, and he had a lot of errors in there. He wrote it from memory. In a general way he is correct. But that Goldman's store was about two doors down from the corner of Freret.

Q: When he mentioned this encroachment he said hardly a cart could pass in front of the store of Mrs. Goldman. So, can we assume that that erosion of the bay front or Front Street was

somewhere between Freret and Greenwood Streets?

A: Yes.

Q: So, at some point that bank line did come in very severely. As far as your knowledge goes, no burnings or sinkings occurred other than the Kinsman?

A: That's right.

Q: There was a small ship yard in the early twentieth century.

A: They built these small racing boats. In fact, on your 1895 map of the waterfront, I think J. Boudreaux's machine shop was the old Parmalee (ship yard).

Q: I think you're right. It's not 1895, its slightly later than that, but the configuration is identical. You've got 1906 and 1912 ship carpenter buildings and then in 1919 it becomes Johnson & Hamilton Garage Machine Shop and the configuration of the buildings is identical. Is that the same building that became Gott Motors?

A: Yes, we used to ship cars here on barges because they didn't have roads and then they would put them up on the wharf.

**Morgan City Floodwall Boat, Tape 001, June 13, 1984, Mr. Godfrey Kiff, Morgan City, LA**

Mr. Godfrey Kiff is a retired Coast Guard lighthouse attendant and resident of Morgan City. This interview was conducted at his home in Morgan City.

Q: How deep is that channel out there in the river right now?

A: You know, well I'm going to tell you something. When I got on this light attendant job here, they shoved a lot of things on me, checking bridges, I had to check the depths of the water every time I was inspecting. When I first started, they had 80 some odd feet of water on the Berwick side under all them piers, of the old bridge not the new one. I kept noticing that some of my lights, they were getting shallower, I couldn't hardly get to them. I'd move 'em, maybe another hundred feet, and in another two or three years I couldn't get to it, it was getting worse. I had no idea what it was. On the same day I retired, it only had 37 feet of water under them bridges there.

Q: On the Berwick side?

A: Mostly all across. The Berwick side was the deepest.

Q: So it went from 80 feet to 37 feet?

A: That's the last reading I got there in the water. The 37 feet was more on the Morgan City side. Did they tell you about that sand bar that built up right out by the Coast Guard building there? It happened twice, it was right there and they come dig it out.

Q: Right in front of the Coast Guard building?

A: All of that. It was just like an island out there, kids went out there and put a sign "for sale." They just had a little strip where you could come into that dock.



**END**

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